Book 1 ch1- START

001 - Who wants to be a [Baker]?

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Check out my other story!

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A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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Book 1 ch1- END

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//Book 3 Shattered Boundaries ch112-162 ok Stub 2024-07-16

Book 3 ch- END
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    Book 4 New Dreams ok Stub 2024-08-29

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    Book 7 ch331-409 Ultimate Truths[klar2025-03-25 16.20]

Book 7 ch- END
Book 7 ch331-409 Ultimate Truths[klar2025-03-25 16.20]

Book 8 ch- START

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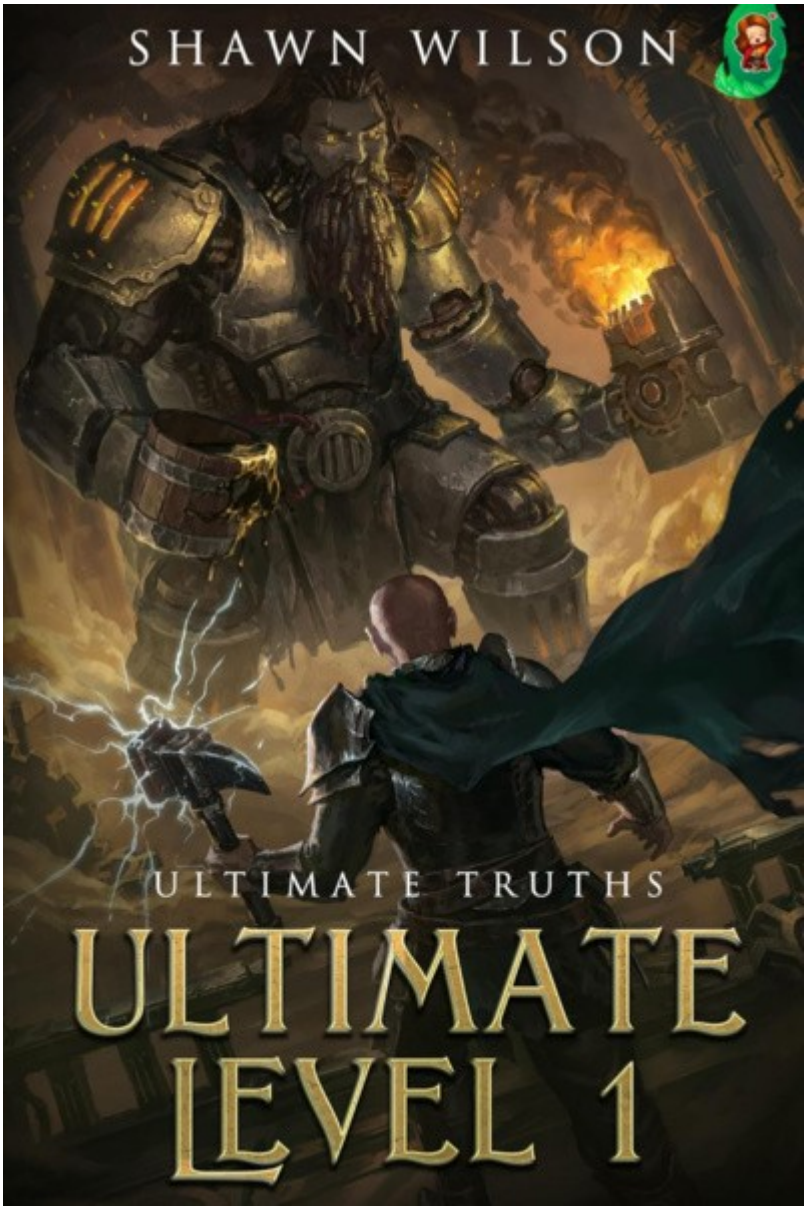

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A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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Chapter 410 - Book 8 Recap

Wew. Some of us had a hard time with book 7 after book 6. One was so focused on fighting and power grinding, while the other was built around figuring out what was taking place on Max's world.

With book 7 we learned a few things.

Someone, no one knows who right now, is playing a game that involves multiple gods and worlds. While many thought Phaius was an evil god bent on destruction and more, we've learned that isn't necessarily the case anymore.

He and Ockrim are both interested in helping Max survive and reach the next point in whatever cosmic game is taking place. We also know that Thuyja plays an active role in farming power and using humans to acquire red skill potions. Of course, that knowledge has led to many having more questions, but we haven't answered them yet.

Max and Rakonath are now bound (Rakonath being the not-so-baby silver dragon hatched from the egg taken from another world), and what that means or how it will impact either of them isn't something either can yet figure out. No update has come and only time will tell how much their bond plays in developing their abilities, power, and more.

Crafting has been a fun point for Max, and with the unlocking of a new Elemental Mastery Weapon Crafting skill, we can now glimpse some of the potential of the powerful weapons to come.

Bob and Max are also working together to use all their knowledge of skills and crafting, learning that others can potentially help with certain elements.

We are waiting to find the right materials so that Max can one day craft the tooth that Wekime gave him.

With the wedding finished, we now have a new point to launch off from. Max, the team, Everett, and a pair of dragons are about to boldly go where no group from his world has gone before.

A few points of knowledge that some have missed while others have asked about.

The towers on Max's world are linked. They can all progress the bonuses from the dragon and demon lvl 50 dungeon. Other worlds do not work for this feature.

Some might have also noticed that there was no bonuses to Max and his tower ‘abilities’ while in Igarra’s tower and defeating the two floors that he was on. This would lead most to believe that towers on another world cannot be used to progress ones ‘official’ tower climbing status.

With those few things mentioned, we are ready for the next chapter of this story.

And thus, book 8 begins.

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A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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2(1) Chapter 411 – A New Beginning 1)

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A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Now on Book 2!

Once upon a time, Helen loved life. And then, by her mid-20s, Helen was over it. Forget love. Forget work. Forget getting dressed or remembering the definition of deodorant. Helen was livin' the life of a recluse and was darned proud of it.

So when an unseen force shattered the planet into millions of pieces and unleashed monsters from the sky, Helen was comforted by the idea that at least now everyone's life sucked.

That is until she joined a party. A party of people who cared. A party of people who tried. And suddenly, the idea of dying a dumb apocalyptic death to satisfy her own nihilism lost its appeal. For the first time in a long while, she had a reason to live.

Now, as she's portaled to places around the globe, battling cryptid monsters, winning quests, and seeking her visa to the new world, Helen is still the same depressed recluse as before, only now she has a pair of blades and *way* too many people counting on her.

But maybe, just maybe, she can help them survive and find the kind of happiness that only comes at the end of the world.

–

Hey everyone! I'm a video game writer, formerly the lead on stuff like The Division and Starlink (including the Star Fox DLC!). That's right: tactical shooters and kids games. What a combo. So now for something that's completely my own.

What you can expect:

> System apocalypse LitRPG
> MC who, despite mistakes, will crawl through hell to win
> Dark humor mixed with brutal action and occasional emotional devastation

Chapters drop Monday and Wednesday @ 11 EST. Get 5 chapters ahead and Discord access with Patreon[L1]. Cheers!

Chapter 411 – A New Beginning

"So you're leaving again?"

Ignoring his sister's frown and tone, Max nodded, choosing instead to tickle and play with Callie, who was babbling a little bit and cooing in response to his actions.

"Part of adventuring is that you will always be headed somewhere. You have the advantage of being in this capital and that there are enough dungeons you don't have to ever leave. Most adventurers don't have the coin or family for such an endeavor like this and often have to grind their way through the other cities."

"It's not that," she groaned, waving her hands in the air as she shifted on the couch. "You were gone for a year! Suddenly, you're back. For so long you were my dorky brother. who wanted to bake cookies and stuff, and now…"

Stacy paused and motioned to the room the Faction had set her and their parents up in.

“Look at this place! There is art… ART! We grew up in a home where the paintings we did as kids never even made the walls of our own house. Then you have these couches and chairs! Every one of them is finer than anything I dreamed of sitting on. And our beds… it’s like sleeping on a cloud.”

“So you want to live in a house without these things?” Max asked, knowing what she was complaining about but not giving his sister an easy time.

A chuckle from Tanila, sitting next to him, letting him know his joke wasn’t missed.

“You’re a bastard.”

“Which makes you one as well.”

“Argg!” Rising to her feet, Stacy gave him the middle finger and then laughed as she moved to where he was. “Give her Callie.”

Without waiting, Max handed his niece to the woman he loved and watched as her green eyes seemed to sparkle the moment she held the cooing child.

His sister reached out and grabbed his arm, and made him stand before she wrapped both arms around him.

“I’ve missed you. You wool-headed fool.”

“I’ve missed you as well, sister,” Max replied, hugging her back and slowly stroking her hair. “One day, perhaps we’ll get more time, and I’ll be able to go on a few more dungeon runs with you, but for now, I have another world to take care of.”

Leaning back, he looked into her eyes and smiled.

“Some of us have taken on obligations, and as much as I wish I could pass them on to another, I can’t.”

“So, what? Two weeks? Maybe three?”

Shrugging, Max chewed on his lip for a moment.

“I’d like to say no more than a month, but it’s been so long, and there are a lot of things I need to figure out. I’d take you if you were stronger, but I won’t risk you as you are right now. Perhaps one day.”

Stacy huffed and stepped back, biting her lip as he had done.

“Just don’t vanish again like before. Mom and Dad are both doing better, but as you can guess, they didn’t come today because seeing you leave is always hard on them. It was even worse when they learned you would be leaving our world again. Mom can’t get over how she feels about you being so far away.”

A knot that he had ignored inside his chest tightened.

“I feel the same way. Trust me, I hope one day this won’t be required but honestly… I’m certain someday everything may change.”

“When you defeat the tower?”

Nodding, Max pointed at Callie.

“Someday, she is going to have to grow up, and when she does, we’ll both be able to be there, helping her choose the path she wants.”

“Woah there… let’s not talk about her growing up already,” Stacy said. “I’m not wanting to walk in the door tomorrow and find her starting to work on skills or classes just yet. Let’s let her enjoy the good life you’ve given us for a while. Besides, we both know you’re going to be her favorite uncle.”

“I’m her only uncle,” Max proclaimed.

Shaking her head, Stacy grinned. “Not anymore. Now she has a hairy dwarf for one as well.”

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Tom groaned as he looked over the stack of papers Everett had given him.

Max tried to not smile too much, watching the one responsible for helping him to hone his fighting technique on the sparring grounds seem to struggle with the other part of running a Faction.

“You know you have help,” Everett said as he pulled a few more items from a chest that was sitting on a table behind the desk. “I’ve spoken with Alfreda, and she will take care of all the materials members bring in. All you need to do is keep the peace, deal with the new applicants, ensure the bills for the building projects are paid on time, keep track–”

“Stop!” Tom cried out, closing his eyes as he leaned back in his chair. “I’ve read the lists… I want to sign up for this trip as well. Find someone else to do this. Someone with a better business sense.”

“Unfortunately, there is no one but you that I trust with everything,” the grey-headed leader declared. “If there were, I’d have already offered them the job. We both knew this day would come at some point.”

Grunting, Tom opened his eyes and glared at his friend.

“No… You always said it would. I promised to quit and find a group to return to the tower with.”

Both men said nothing momentarily, eyes locked in a battle of gazes until Tom gave in and looked away.

“Tell me you’ll make his life difficult on the other world.”

Max shrugged. “I doubt it will be rainbows and mugs of alcohol. The truth is I need to find out what we can do to ensure the place runs without problems. My real desire is

to find a way to communicate with them on a better basis and maybe find a partner in managing this world. Had I thought about it, I would have asked Phaius about that."

"*I would have asked Phaius about that* ," Tom mimicked, shaking his head. "Now he acts like he and the gods are drinking buddies."

"Oh, what I wouldn't give to taste what they drink," Everett declared, smiling as his eyes started to move, looking up at nothing. A few seconds later a bottle of alcohol both men recognized appeared in his hand, and he moved to the desk and set it down.

"This is yours for taking over this job for me. Try to not drink it all in one day."

Tom's eyes grew wide as he sat up in the chair and slowly reached out his hand toward the crystal bottle.

"You're certain?"

Nodding, Everett motioned to it and moved around the desk to sit beside Max.

"I am. Now then, anything else I can give advice-wise before we leave tomorrow?"

"Nothing that I'm aware of right now," the Faction trainer replied. "I'm certain the moment you're gone I'll have a dozen questions to ask."

"Erwini has offered to help and a few of the council members will stop by in the coming weeks to give aid if needed. Just know they see this as a test run. Perhaps they might offer you the job before I get back."

Taking the alcohol from the desk, a glass appeared in Tom's hand, and he started to pour a finger's worth of drink.

"I win," Max replied with a grin.

"What?" Tom asked, glancing at the two men.

Groaning, Everett pulled out a gold coin and flicked it to Max who caught it in the air.

"You bet on this?"

"Of course," Max replied, putting on a show with the gold coin as it tumbled across the top of his fingers to disappear and reappear over his pointer finger and start its path again. "I told him he wouldn't make it a minute before you poured a drink. Everett was certain you'd wait till we left or at least offer us all a drink."

Tom's middle finger appeared, and he chuckled, lifting the glass with his other hand to his lips.

"I guess I better make sure you win that bet then."

***

A quarter moon hung in the night sky, the wind blowing softly over the training area.

Lightstone lanterns cast their shadows along the path that led from the gate to the different buildings, only a few guards were present as the group said goodbye to each other.

Max’s parents still hadn’t come, and he knew that Stacy was right. The thought of saying goodbye was too much for them at the moment.

He watched as Tom embraced everyone, making jokes and laughing as Everett tried to shoo him away.

“You ready for this?” Tanila asked, moving to hold Max’s hand.

Taking a deep breath, he nodded.

“We both know I’ve been anxious about this for a while. I can’t stand being responsible for so many lives. Especially when I’m not there to do anything to help.”

“That’s what I love about you,” she said, pulling him closer. “Inside you beats a heart bigger than anyone else I know. Just relax. We’ll be there in a moment. Just one last stop right?”

Rubbing his chest with his free hand, Max nodded.

I can feel the tug now from Rakonath. It’s weird how much it has grown since coming back to Peltagow. Being closer I guess does it.

Only time will tell. You’re certain you want to leave him and Aerthen in the other world if things are safe?

The options are limited, especially if there is another dragon hunting him here. I would hope that her strength and the knowledge that I personally support her might cause those who live on that world and visit it to pause any intentions of evil.

Because we both know there is nothing better than bringing another dragon to a world to rule it right after they were basically enslaved by one before.

We discussed this…

Yes. Familiarity is a powerful thing. Perhaps this time it will be advantageous.

After Tom's last hug was given, everyone gathered around Max.

“Make sure you’re touching me. Everyone ready?”

All of them nodded as they put their hands on his upper body. When he sensed that they were touching, Max activated his skill.

[Travel - Waypoint]

A wave of heat came and then vanished a few seconds later, a presence of a silver dragon rushing toward him filled his sonar.

MAX!

Laughing, he stepped forward, freeing himself from the small circle of his friends. Holding out his arms, Rakonath came near.

“Ogre nuts! You’ve grown!”

A grin appeared on the young dragon’s maw, and he pulled up just short of colliding with Max, lowering his head.

I have you to thank for that. I think in another week or two I will have finally completed my absorption of that elf you gave me. She has started forming a very nice core inside me!

“Use your words,” Aerthen said as the red dragon moved toward the group, her form starting to shrink from her normal gigantic state.

“A… two dragons…” Everett said, glancing between the pair. “I mean… you told me… but…”

“I’m going to have to put a limit on the number of people you keep bringing here,” Aerthen said, now in her humanoid form. “Unless of course you’re bringing me one to eat.”

Everett took a step back, and everyone started to howl with laughter as it took him a moment to realize the joke that had been played on him.

“I like him,” the red dragon declared as she moved to where Max was and held out her hand. “Still, I’m a bit anxious about leaving this place. It has been my home for so long.”

“You don’t have to go,” Max replied, his fingers scratching the scales of his dragon’s jawline, getting trills in return.

“And miss out on something all of my kind would gladly experience? Never!”

“She’s been talking about this for the last week since you came and checked on us,” Rakonath said. “And to think she accuses me of acting foolish.”

A growl that seemed to vibrate the air came from Aerthen as she glared at the silver dragon, flashing a toothy smile when he lowered his head slightly after her response.

“It seems dragons aren’t above… uh… tail wagging about whose is bigger,” Fowl teased, moving to where Max was and holding out a fresh quarter of a cow that had just been butchered this morning.

“I like him,” Rakonath declared before using his tongue to free the gift from their warrior's hand.

Shaking his head, Max sighed and chewed on his lip a moment as he looked at everyone.

An old Faction leader… two dragons… and a tower party. What in the world am I worried about?

Do you want me to go over the list or–

It was rhetorical and you know it.

Laughter echoed inside his skull.

Oh, I know, but I enjoyed sensing the way you reacted to my statement. Now, let’s stop this waiting and go. I’m tired of how anxious you are.

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[L1] https://www.patreon.com/SavingThrow

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A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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3(1) Chapter 412 - Returning to Igarra's World [1)]

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A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Get ready to answer the call of Humanity's System:

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Chapter 412 - Returning to Igarra's World

Max’s sonar picked up the moving shapes the second his group appeared in the safe room he had designated for when he would return.

Aerthen began to react, as did Rakonath, both dragons sensing those with weapons drawing close.

“Stop!”

As his eyes focused and Max allowed his sonar to tell him everything it could, he sensed the walls of air, earth, ice, and fire that had formed around them, creating a protective barrier.

Wanting to curse for being a fool and not wearing every bit of armor he had, Max felt himself shove off the ground, propelled by the wind ability he had gained from Riniya, moving toward the shape he recognized.

“Captain Olgura!”

The foxkin had a hand up, no weapons present and stopped the other eleven guards from advancing from each side, all ready for battle.

“Ifrit. Forgive me, but you are required to come with me. No longer are you the master of this world.”

It was then that Max sensed Bob’s acknowledgment of the list of notifications that he had ignored upon sensing the threat when they emerged.

[Skill Consumed Attempt Failed - Entity Out of Range] x6

[Stats Consumed Attempt Failed - Entity Out of Range] x5

[Greater Soul Acquired - Soul Transferred]

It appears Sog’thollech was busy while we were gone.

Clearing his throat, Max saw that the room was typically empty, a small hall that had served as a waiting area. Quilazmore had informed him that it now had chairs where the guards had been waiting.

“What do you mean? Who is in control and where are Jazzjak and Quilazmore?”

“Both of them are fine, they are–” Olgura’s response stopped, her tan fur starting to stand on end as Aerthen transformed from her humanoid shape. “A dragon!? Two dragons!?”

The other guards started to take steps back, their weapons that had been trained on the group now trembling slightly at the scene before them.

“Allies, now tell me, who controls the city now and what happened to my friend, Sog?”

Dozens of questions swirled through his head, but right now, Max needed to focus on just a few things: ensuring his friends were safe while gaining knowledge of what had happened since he left.

“The demon? That one stopped the first challenger. I’m afraid he didn’t survive the one that came next,” the foxkin replied. “Now the city and the teleporter is under the control of Lord Kazrak and I am to take you… and anyone you show up with to him. Your friend… she will not be able to make it through the hallway.”

A low thrum came from Aerthen as the dragon’s head was pressed against the forty-foot ceiling. Her immense size had forced the guards back and threatened to crush his friends had they not moved slightly to the side. Each of them was now outfitted for battle, eyes scanning the area.

“Max?” the Faction leader called out.

Turning to where his friends were, he saw the confusion on their faces and then realized what he had forgotten.

You are correct. None of them can understand a word that is being spoken.

Grunting to himself, he pulled out a ring he hadn’t used in ages, aligning the runes and moved slowly to where his friends were.

“Everett, wear this. You’ll be able to understand most of what is said. I’ll have to get one of these for the rest of you. Stay ready. Someone has taken control of the city, and we need to go see who.”

“Is that wise?” Aerthen asked, a few wisps of smoke coming from her nostrils. “I’m far stronger in this form, but we both know what they do not. How can you trust that they will not lead us to a trap?”

Tanila’s head moved up and down in agreement with what was just said, and he frowned, turning his attention to Olgura.

“You heard what they asked. Are you leading me into a trap?”

She shifted slightly from side to side, her nose twitching on her snout.

“One does not call where I am supposed to take you a trap, but the truth is… I am leading you to one who is strong. The aura he gives off is… oppressive. Lord Kazrak isn’t like one you faced in the arena, and while I’m certain he isn’t as strong as Igarra was, the few who stood up to him, your champion included, did not survive. All were cut down quickly.”

“How long ago was this?”

Her eyes shifted from side to side, and then she started to tap a few different fingers.

“About two weeks after your champion arrived. Once his presence was announced, the first challenge came. It was a glorious fight, and he won but barely. A week later the next came. He did not make it out of that fight. Since then, four other challengers have stepped forward. None of them… survived.”

It seems that perhaps leaving Sog’thollech here was not the best solution. From what has been described, the moment he was announced as your stead, he became someone who could be challenged, providing the winner with the spoils of this world.

Why didn’t the other two tell me this would happen? I mean, surely they should have known?

Perhaps they forget you were unaware of what doing so would mean and believed that whoever you left in your stead would be strong enough to defeat whoever came. It appears this may be something that won’t stop for a while.

“How long since the last challenge came?”

“Nine days,” she replied.

“Which means one is due or?”

“It would appear that there are no other challengers right now. The deaths Kazrak has given have been rather… effective at letting those know how he feels about attempts to take what he has claimed. Some believe there will be a few more in the coming months, but for now… his power is absolute.”

“And his rule?” Max asked, noticing that Everett was doing his best to translate what was being said to the others.”

“Fair, firm, and appropriate. There is no doubt that going against his wishes means death. Even now the longer we talk, the more likely I may face death for not being quicker in taking you to him. Still, the new champion understands how powerful he can become from a place like this, and there was doubt of when you would return again. Or if you would.”

Stop that, it looks bad, and you’re doing what Stacy does.

Realizing he was chewing his lip, a habit he seemed to repeat after watching his sister do it so often, Max collected himself and snapped his fingers. That act made the other guards who could see him turn towards him.

“I shall take my friends to somewhere safe first. Where should I come to meet this…”

“Lord Kazrak. He will be in the throne room. Especially once word of your arrival reaches him.”

It took a moment, but Max summoned the bag he was looking for and began pulling cloaks out of it.

“Each of you needs to put one of these on. It will mask the ability to detect you.”

“Does this mean you want me to transform?” Aerthen asked.

“I do.”

Tanila gave him a look of concern but said nothing as she put the cloak on that he handed her. Immediately the presence she gave off lessened, and Max was grateful that he had acquired these from Igarra’s vault.

“Captain Olgura, go tell him that I am coming. He can face me in the arena. I’ll be there shortly.”

A bow came, and the foxkin gave a sharp whistle, causing all the other beastkin and insectoid guards to finally put their weapons away.

“May you prove yourself once again. Remember that the strong take what they want.”

She motioned to the other guards, and each of them began to move to where she was headed, using one of the doors that Max knew led toward the throne room he always avoided.

“So… you weren’t kidding,” Everett said after the room was just those who had come from their world. “Adventure and excitement from the moment we arrived. Are you certain this is a fight you should be taking? I mean… couldn’t you negotiate with this Kazrak to work together?”

Shaking his head, Max stored the backpack on the ground.

“No. This world doesn’t do that well, especially if it would require sharing power. Even though I ask for nothing, there is little chance from what I have seen it would work and taking you… seven near him isn’t going to help my cause.”

“Because we’re weak?” Fowl asked, a frown plastered on his face.

“Compared to what is out here… yes. The power difference is…”

“You don’t have to try and tell us,” Batrire said as she squeezed Fowl’s plated arm. “We are well aware of the difference in power between you and us. If they are like you… we would only be a liability.”

“Which begs the question, where are we going to wait for your hopeful return?” Aerthen asked, adjusting the dark cloak Max had given her as it grew to fit her shape and size.

“Rakonath is my limiting factor,” Max said as he studied the silver dragon that looked slightly smaller after having puffed itself out and extended his wings some when the guards were present. “I can’t take him through some of the hallways as he would get stuck, and one of the places I considered would be impossible for him to enter as well.

“Going outside of the city isn’t any better as I honestly don’t know where to put you that wouldn’t have some monster trying to eat you all. As a group, I’m certain you could survive, but there would also be non-stop battles that take place. I tried to warn you all. This world is all about fighting, and when someone senses weakness or blood, it brings out those looking for a meal or chance to get stronger.”

“I’m sorry I am causing so many problems,” Rakonath said. “I never intended to be such a bother.”

Shaking his head, Max moved to where the silver dragon was and motioned for him to lower his head.

Using one hand, he scratched under the young dragon’s jaw, while working the other along the ridge of his snout.

“Do not think that way. I’m still trying to get used to the fact I have a dragon as a friend and partner. One day we’ll figure it out and hopefully we can spend a little more time together in the coming weeks, getting to explore and see what this world has to offer.”

A low trill came as his fingers scratched the scales Max could sense had gotten much harder since the first day they had met.

“I guess we need to leave sooner than later?” Everett asked.

Nodding, Max smiled as he gave the older man a real inspection.

“You look like a real adventurer in that armor and with those swords. Who knew you could do something like that, even at your age.”

A chuckle came from the others as Everett gave a twirl, showing off his silver armor with a pair of golden axes etched on the chest piece.

“Just trying to fit in with the rest of you.”

“Okay. Everyone touch me as before. We’re not going far.”

When the purple portal vanished, they were crammed into a hallway and Max was glad to see that there were no guards present.

It would appear that Jazzjak and Quilazmore kept their part of the agreement and didn’t share this place with the new champion.

Moving to where the stone was that hid the place he was looking for, Max could sense that nothing was different from the last time he had been here.

Everyone needs a dark elf they can trust. Right?

The faintest chuckle came from Bob as he put his hand over the stone that was the key to his hiding place.

[Stone Mastery]

Worked stone bricks began to shift, and the purple-colored wall moved apart, each of them sliding down the hallway until it revealed a shimmering portal behind.

Looking back at Rakonath, Max grinned and moved more bricks, having to clear almost the entire section of the twenty-foot-tall wall.

I wonder if Igarra knew this hallway needed to be this wide.

“Everyone in,” Max said as the last of the bricks from the wall were moved out of the way.

Quickly they all walked up to and through the shimmering wall of magic, finding themselves inside a pocket dimension like the one the guild halls used as their vaults.

“You have one of these?” Everett asked as he scanned the larger open area. Chests lined a wall and a variety of furniture was placed in different areas. It was easily fifty yards wide and about twenty yards across.

“Well, the old champion of the world had a few of these. This one was basically empty, and I’ve claimed it as my own private area. You all will stay here until I return.”

He saw the looks on their faces, and Cordellia was visibly frowning.

“And when will that be?” their ranger asked.

“When I’ve claimed my throne again.”

Moving to where Tanila was, he pulled her close and kissed her.

“I love you. I’ll be back soon.”

A single head bob was all she gave as a reply. She wore a forced smile, yet Max sensed her heart racing.

“Make sure everyone sees that you won’t hold back.”

“I will, my love,” he replied.

Taking a few steps back he pointed at some chests.

“There is food and drink there. You all try to relax as best as you can. I’ll return shortly.”

As he started to walk away, Max sensed Rakonath moving to where Tanila was, slowly nudging her with his head.

I will take care of her. Return to us both.

Wishing he could reply without having to speak out loud, Max gazed at the silver dragon and smiled.

Then he left, putting the pieces of the wall back in place.

We ready for this?

As ready as we can be. I’m excited about consuming something worthwhile.

His laughter echoed off the walls as the purple portal took him from where he stood.

Links

//[2025-04-08 14:11]

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/110252/shaper-of-metal-a-post-apoc-litrpg

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4(1) Chapter 413 - A New Challenger 1)

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2181635/chapter-413-a-new-challenger;COPY_OK[2025-04-08 13:44],[Fav2025-04-08 13:42],[word2025-04-08 14:21],[publish2025-04-07 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-07 15:02]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 413 - A New Challenger

Max found himself in the box he had spent so much time in. Glancing at the section of the stone wall against which he had ended Ezreal's life, he forced himself to calm down.

Time seemed to tick by, and then after a good fifteen minutes a section of the wall began to move.

"Max?"

"Quilazmore, it's been too long," he replied, watching the dark elf slowly enter the room.

"We were expecting you in the throne room at first, but I told Lord Kazrak that you wouldn't come there. He was… is a bit angry, but I do not think he will be enraged by such defiance. If you are okay with it, I will return and tell him you are here."

"Please do. I need to settle this more definitively this time."

Grimacing, a row of sharp teeth were displayed as the one he had entrusted with helping to run this place looked anxious.

"What do you know about him?"

"Nothing beyond the fact he defeated Sog'thollech," Max replied. "What can you tell me?"

"He is strong and fast like you. Uses two axes that are magical and if they draw blood, something happens to the one he has injured. I'm not certain as none have lived to tell the tale."

"Are you okay? Your family?"

The dark elf looked at him and nodded. "He is a… fair leader. Had I not known you and not experienced the kindness you have shown me, I would say he is better than Igarra in some ways. He is perfect for this world. Only the strong survive. Those he deems strong enough and worthy of him find a place in his pack."

"And those who aren't?"

“Slaves, tools, servants, food.”

It pained him to hear how casually Quilazmore had said those things, not appearing to be bothered at all by how it sounded.

“Would it be better for me to leave and let him rule?”

His grimace returned and the dark elf slowly shook his head.

“No… in time I’m afraid one will come to challenge him who will win. It may be months, it might be years, but when they come, there is no telling what they desire. Sog’thollech defeated such a being. She was… similar to him in some ways. He called her a variation or a… mutation of his kind. He rejected the offer she made to partner together, becoming something different through some…”

The dark elf shuddered and smacked his lips.

“What your champion described is best to not talk about again. He said no and laughed at her. That infuriated her, and she promised to kill all of us within Iga… within Lord Kazrak’s house. So he killed her. It was a fight which drew many eyes and after that moment, a week passed, and the next challenge came.”

Max had dozens of other questions, each of them he knew would lead to another set.

“I need to go. If I delay too long, then my loyalty will be questioned. As you have made the challenge you have one day to move through the city without fear unless you attack someone. Tomorrow a bell will sound throughout the city. An hour later the challenge will begin. If you are not present, then you forfeit, and your image will be shown across all the worlds that watch, each of them learning of your cowardice and that you are free game to anyone who wishes to take your life.”

“How many worlds are watching?” Max asked, not concerned at all with the other part.

“For something like this? A few thousand at least.”

Unable to help himself, Max coughed a few times.

“Thousands?!”

“I don’t have time to go into details. We can talk more, but yes. I shall see you tomorrow, Max. Just know we shall still call you Ifrit as that is the name everyone is waiting to hear. Many are anxious for when you might return.”

His words seemed to fail him as the dark elf turned and moved to where the opening in the stone wall was.

“Be safe, and I’m sorry about Sog’thollech. He was one who understood this world.”

It took a minute after Quilazmore had left for Max to get his mind where it needed to be.

To know that your name is spoken across thousands of worlds is a marvelous thing. Soon more shall know it, and that means when the time comes, we should be in a better place for what comes next.

Grunting, Max closed his eyes.

What comes next? You always talk about this and mention it yet you never go into full details.

He was frustrated and worse was the knowledge that thousands of worlds apparently knew of him. That concerned him even more if a god decided to show up here and cause problems.

The day you become a god. Why are we climbing the tower and don't say just to become strong enough to protect your friends?

Even though he wasn't speaking out loud, Max's jaw tightened.

I don't want to be a god!

Yet we both know Igarra couldn't have stood up to Phaius or Ockrim. If you hope to be able to stand up against Thuyja, what must you become? A god.

The wind in his lungs left him, a sigh that seemed to reverberate off the walls as his sonar listened to himself breathe.

Never did I want to be a god... I just wanted to be strong enough to protect my family... to protect Tanila and the others... and now my unborn child and Rakonath. If I'm a god, does that mean I'll have a world full of... people? Beings? Lives that I'll have to protect?

It does. This is why I do not talk about it anymore. The obvious answer is you struggle to focus on something that is far away, and yet it draws closer with each breath you take. Soon you shall move into the tower and reach the 60th floor. How long has it been since one of the people from your world has done this? It took no time to climb that far. We both know if you had done it alone it would have been even faster, but neither of us are foolish enough to believe that you can do this alone.

Soon you will have to realize that the day will come when your party does something none have done in so long. Each of you will become something different.

His fist struck the stone wall, and then it hit it a few more times. Dozens and soon hundreds of strikes had left a hole that slowly repaired itself.

As he stood there, looking at his hand and the unbroken skin, a chirping sound came, and Max turned to where the large display was in the room.

It lit up and Quilazmore's face appeared on the screen in the top right corner.

The rest of it was filled with a replay of what Max guessed was a previous challenger fighting Kazrak.

A battle between two juggernauts, each of them easily fifteen feet tall wasn't much of a fight. Kazrak was a wolfkin of some sort, but his skin was metallic, his entire body reflecting light. Beneath his feet was an eight, well now six-legged arachnoid that was missing four arms and two legs.

Only two arms remained, each of them holding a shield, both seeming to struggle to keep them upward, suffering under the barrage of attacks from the axe Kazrak held in each hand. They were made of black metal and had a weird aura that seemed to radiate around them, almost sucking the light near them.

Webs littered the open area of the sand-covered arena floor, all of them sizzling in the sand, yet the strands that touched the current champion of this world didn't seem to do anything.

No matter what the arachnoid creature did, the wolfkin maneuvered quickly into position, blocking its escape and carving more limbs from its body. Soon all that remained was its oversized abdomen and its upper body.

Unable to move on the floor, and with only a single arm barely holding its last shield, it's mouth moved, about to say something when the axes came together, freeing its head.

"And that is just a fraction of the power Lord Kazrak possesses!"

Max realized he had missed whatever had been said earlier, his eyes focused on the champion he was going to face tomorrow.

"Now this message is being broadcasted across the AR-42069 network as a priority Alpha challenge! After four easily won victories, the moment all of you have been waiting for has finally arrived!"

Fast-paced and weird-sounding music played as the screen shifted to replays of Max cutting down multiple challengers he had faced in this very arena. The last one to appear was him, standing next to Igarra's lifeless corpse.

"The one you all know as Ifrit has returned, coming to claim the Champion title once more for world TYR-80921!"

Max felt goosebumps as his image, and Kazrak's appeared side by side on the display, both of their faces having been frozen as each one snarled. The rising noise of a crowd cheering was in the background as Quilazmore's face moved to the center of the display, pushing both his face and his challenger's off to the side.

"One day from now the broadcast will go live! Don't miss this and don't miss out on betting on who shall sit upon the throne and claim TYR-80921 as their very own!"

Max stood there stunned, as he watched the dark elf's face vanish and a flood of small text quickly scroll across the display, talking about how the AR-42069 network approved this message and where they could go to place their wagers.

That was… impressive and inspiring. I did not realize how good we looked when we are fighting.

Snorting, Max shook his head and glanced at the wall he had been punching, seeing that it was almost fully repaired and the pieces that had fallen to the ground were gone, absorbed by the room.

I’m not sure I would have used either of those words. This only frustrates me more, and you know it.

That there is some cosmic group out there that channels the power of fighting and turns it into a money and power-making outlet? How is this different from what those two queens do in your capital?

He knew Bob was right, and that only made it worse.

I… How many worlds are like this? And no I’m not looking for a reply, and you know it… It’s just the fact that wherever we go, it always seems that fighting, death, and conflict is what drives everything and is used to make money or gain power.

And you my friend are… were the champion for a world like this. Had I known what we did, I might have told you to take your friends and go. Now it appears we are unable to do such a thing without being blacklisted as cowards and being told we are free game to be killed. That might not seem like a big issue right now, but I can imagine how it would make things much harder on you to protect your loved ones after the tower.

His fist struck the wall again, and then Max leaned his forehead against the cold stone.

The cool temperature of it felt good against his skin, and for a moment he just stood there, bent over like that.

I guess we have no choice. Once again, I’m stuck in someone else's game and forced to do what I would prefer not to. But Tanila was right. I need to make sure everyone knows that I’m not playing around.

Then you need to stop wasting time. We have a stop to make and only a day before it is time to fight. If you wish to ever see your friends again, we need to get to work.

Max grunted and stood up. There were plenty of things he needed to do.

Links

//[2025-04-08 14:21]

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/110972/blood-reaper

5(1) Chapter 414 - A Simple Request 1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2184547/chapter-414-a-simple-request;[Fav2025-04-08 15:38],[word2025-04-08 15:38],[publish2025-04-08 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-08 15:02]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 414 - A Simple Request

Max shifted under the gaze of the woman he hoped would help him. She didn't appear very happy when he walked into her shop, but he at least hadn't been kicked out for now.

"You do realize how difficult you have made my life… every day I have some fool come in here, asking me to create something for them like what you had. Gone are the easy days of getting only one or two absurd requests every month or so. Now I must deal with it at least twice or thrice a week! A WEEK!"

Buwingrid's oversized fist slammed down onto the stone counter she was standing behind. The pair of dwarven girls who were helping other patrons on the other side of their shop didn't seem to react at all, unlike the mantis and badgerkin who jumped slightly.

"You're welcome," he replied with a grin. "So what you're telling me is that business has been good."

"Good? GOOD!? It's been phenomenal, but I haven't had time to get a proper beard washing or massage in over two months! Do you know what that does to a dwarf?"

Max could see she was smiling, even if her red beard did a great job of hiding it, but her cheeks had moved upward.

He tried not to focus on how dry her beard looked compared to the last time he could remember it.

A bottle appeared in his hand, and he held it out to her.

"One of my alchemist friends from another world created this. The two dwarves, one of which is my half-brother, swear by it for their beards."

Her head cocked to the side and a bushy red eyebrow rose as she stared at him, both silver eyes moving between the gift he was offering and his face.

"Half-brother?"

“Well, technically, we’re full brothers. Did the blood ceremony and all,” Max replied. “Still, he’s ugly, so I tell everyone we’re half brothers to not make them think worse of me.”

Buwingrid broke out in laughter, pounding the stone counter a few more times, her face beginning to match the color of her hair as she shook her head.

“He must be a special one to put up with someone like you. A pink skin… a brother to a dwarf. I was certain I had heard everything, but now…”

She took the jar from his hand and unscrewed it, sniffed it and then dipped a fingertip in it, sticking it in her mouth.

“Uh… I don’t think you’re supposed to eat it.”

“I know, but don’t think I’m just going to randomly put something on my beard without tasting it first,” Buwingrid replied. “You don’t know how important a beard is until you see someone use some *magical cream* and make all their hair fall out or get kinky.”

The weapon crafter’s face scrunched, and Max could only imagine what she was thinking about or remembering.

“So, I have a favor,” he said as she began to rub a little bit of the paste between two fingers.

“I’m sure you do,” muttered the dwarf as she slowly put a little bit on the edge of her beard and worked it in. “This one of those conversations out front or one of those conversations in the back?”

“Oh most definitely in the back. I’m pretty certain I don’t need you acting like some doe-eyed young dwarf and promising me anything I want around those two after we talk.”

Buwingrid’s gaze narrowed, and her fingers froze from where she massaged her beard.

“I’m going to pretend that for a moment you think I’d be interested in someone as hairless as you.”

Laughing, Max shrugged and motioned to the door he knew led to the forge.

“Remember those words in a moment. I’m sure you’ll wish you had never spoken them.”

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A soft moan escaped Buwingrid’s lips as she stood there, panting and all flushed.

“You… Max Hoste… have no idea how right you were.”

Laughing, he nodded and patted his necklace.

“I’m just glad your mom wasn’t here.”

“By Ockrim’s beard you’re right. She would have forced you to give that to her.”

Shaking her head and taking a deep breath, the weaponsmith cleared her throat.

“So… a token from a dwarven god. I know of a few and can’t say I’ve ever met them, rules and all.”

“So they can’t come here?”

Buwingrid shook her head as she straightened her beard and pulled out an oversized sheet of paper.

“No. Gods aren’t allowed to come to this world. I could return to my own and try to see one, but if I’m honest, that’s not something that would work for me. The cost to even visit his temple and request an audience would most likely take all the treasure I have earned. Unless of course, the Queen herself desired to do such a thing for me, but that won’t happen.”

“Because?”

“I’m a nobody. I mean, I’m skilled with creating weapons, but there are hundreds like me all over the world I’m from. Maybe I could tell you about it one day, but I don’t think we have time if you’re fighting tomorrow.”

“That’s what I like about you; you are always focused on crafting.”

“Bah, I’d tell you to go hump yourself with a request like what you’re wanting but after showing me that token I’m kind of obligated to help out. Still a bit upset you won’t trade it.”

“You and every dwarf including the King and Queen from my world.”

Nodding, Buwingrid didn’t reply, bending down and making a few sketches on the paper.

Max now realized what she was doing as she drew, marking it with runes and imbuing some mana into it.

“What does that paper do? I mean… before I thought when you sketched it and marked stuff with me it was just for a guide, but now I see that it’s not.”

Her right eyebrow raised as she glanced up at him before shaking her head and returning to her sketching.

“One day I’ll learn how a pink skin knows so much about all this… but yes, you’re right. This paper isn’t just paper. It’s a part of the crafting process. By drawing it out, making marks on it, laying the runes out early it allows me to *cheat* the crafting process a little bit and speed up certain things. Of course, the cost gets passed on to you as I have to order these from a different world, and they ain’t cheap.”

If we could get some of those, it would help us in what we eventually want to do with that dragon tooth. Imagine what we could craft with one if we were able to lay out everything beforehand.

But could we even design it yet? I mean… a Fire Forged bar has some use. I think this token I'm holding can be used in crafting. We both know that a power core would be a boon. Yet with all those pieces, I'm not sure we still have all the necessary items to craft it. Besides, I think my skill is still too low to do it justice.

All I hear is blah blah blah. You're standing across from a dwarf with more crafting knowledge than you. She just happens to have tools and parts that would be beneficial for us to have. And now you're balking at asking her how much to buy one?

Maybe she'll just let me see one.

A groan came from Bob, but his skill didn't reply.

"Do you have one of those I can buy or just borrow for a bit?"

Buwingrid's pencil froze, and she frowned as she put her writing tool down and stood upright.

"Didn't you just hear what I said?"

"I did. How much for one?"

"Before we talk about that, tell me your crafting skill level."

Max blinked a few times and smacked his lips.

"What happened to a little privacy? Are you going to tell me yours?"

"Sure, after you go first," she replied, putting both of her hands against the stone counter and leaning against them.

Taking a moment, he considered her question and then grinned.

"So which one do you want me to share first?"

Buwingrid originally had a smirk on her face, which quickly vanished, and her right eyebrow was doing its usual dance of rising when she was caught off guard by his comment.

"Which one… just how many do you have?"

"Now… that seems like you should go first, and then I'll go second."

Crossing her arms, the dwarf frowned.

"Are we talking actual metal crafting skills and not some stupid other one like baking or cooking?"

Grabbing his chest as if he had been stabbed, Max feigned an injury.

A second later, a cardboard box appeared in his hand and he opened it, pulling out a treat he had acquired from one of the Dagon's bakers.

"Is that… beer?"

“That it is,” Max replied with a grin. “The King of the Dwarves on my world did me a favor when I helped with my brother's wedding. We made beer-infused cupcakes. They have two different flavors of ale infused in them. The cake part is a dark, bitter one, and the cream on top is a sweet and light ale.”

Closing the lid and pulling the box back slowly, he grinned.

“Of course, baking isn’t a real skill, so I mean why–”

“I got 13!”

He felt his eyes blinking rapidly as he took in that number, not realizing for a moment that Buwingrid was holding out her hand, motioning to the box.

Handing it to her, he watched as she pulled out the cupcake and sniffed it a few times before using her finger to carefully get a little bit of the frosting and taste it.

“Oh… I’m going to have to save this, or I’ll gobble it up right now like an oversized orc.”

After she had set it back in the box and stored it, she turned and motioned with her hand.

“Well?”

“Well what?”

“How many crafting skills do you have?”

“Counting or not counting baking?”

Rolling her eyes, Buwingrid waved her hand in the air.

“Gods, I don’t care.”

“Eight with baking, seven without.”

Snorting, the dwarf shook her head and studied him, stroking her beard a little as she did.

“You’re serious. Eight crafting skills? And you’re a fighter, magic user, and Ockrim knows what else?”

“You asked, and I need you to trust me when I tell you I need one of these papers and want to know the cost.”

Cursing under her breath about some creature called a *yorkaol* and how it does something he guessed was inappropriate, Buwingrid rubbed her eyes momentarily.

“What can you offer? I do not doubt that you'll have plenty of tokens if you get access to the vault again. Those are great, but we both know what I really want.”

Max nodded and pulled out two teeth from Igarra, holding one in each hand.

“This should be more than enough,” he said, twirling the three-foot-long pieces.

“It should… but I need one more.”

Frowning, he nodded and put both down on the counter and pulled out another, carefully stacking it on top of the pair.

“You sure seem like you’re getting the better end of this deal.”

“Bah, I’m the one who will be working all night. Besides, you’re getting a rush job, custom-made, and all I’m getting out of it are some dragon teeth, a couple of scales, some tokens, and a promise to make my life richer when you win.”

“Stop acting like a drama elf,” Max replied. “We both know you’re going to bet on me and make a killing. Besides, if you don’t, I’ll pull out this token and have you follow me around town for a month.”

A squeak came from her throat as whatever retort she appeared to have got caught inside it.

Coughing, she shook her head and held out her hand, a rolled-up piece of paper in it.

“Take your prize, and now tell me what your rank is. For weaponcrafting.”

“Which one?” Max asked with a wink.

Her palm slapped herself in the face as she groaned.

“Ockrim, I’m so not getting enough love for helping this fool.”

Links

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[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/110896/return-of-the-s-rank-hunter/chapter/2165446/chapter-1-the-integration-event

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6(1) Chapter 415 - Crafting Decisions 1b)

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2187387/chapter-415-crafting-decisions;**COPY_OK[2025-04-09 15:52],[Fav2025-04-09 15:50],[word2025-04-09 15:50],[publish2025-04-09 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-09 15:02]**

Chapter 415 - Crafting Decisions

Max tried to stop smiling as he and Buwingrid worked on the different parts of the weapon he had asked her to craft.

She hadn't been very excited to learn that he had two legendary weapon crafting skills, one of which she possessed, but hers was a lower rank.

He of course had been surprised to learn how many she possessed and the ranks of hers.

So this is another one of those world questions I'll one day find out.

How do some worlds have an easier time earning ranks in crafting skills while another world struggles to acquire or advance them?

Nodding as he hammered on the metal she had given him, Max glanced up and saw Buwingrid engraving runes on the shaft for his weapon.

Yes. I mean her world is filled with crafters, but she also said that there are over ten thousand dungeons in her world, which is about ten times the size of this one. I cannot begin to fathom what that must be like.

An underground world that operates on deep mining, dungeons that are primarily used as ways to gather materials, and a world that produces fighters she says could easily fight in the ring outside the center part of this city? I'd say it sounds about right.

Don't forget what she said, though.

Making sure he focused on the next few strikes of his hammer, he said nothing, returning it to the forge to heat up again.

That her people fight on other worlds. That there are whole planets where the populations do just that, and it's basically a life aimed around growing up as a soldier or one who outfits them. Which is why she is here.

Don't forget she mentioned how their world is under siege by other worlds, many of which are often what you all consider *evil* races or creatures. Hearing that things like orcs, goblins, ogres, and more have systems like yours and hers, as well as worlds and gods, adds some concern.

I guess we're going to experience some of those things eventually, which leads me to wonder about the stories of legends.

Lost in that conversation, Max continued to take the metal he was working on out, hammering it, getting a dozen strikes before he had to put it back in the forge for a bit. It was taking him numerous repetitions of the whole process to see any result at all, the metal she had given him was one that he had never seen before.

"You're making good progress," Buwingrid said when she approached where he was, twirling the seven-foot shaft in her hand. "I would have thought you'd be done by now."

"No you didn't," he replied. "We both know this metal takes forever to shape, and the heat doesn't hold well. It's why you gladly farmed it off to me."

Winking, she nodded.

“You’re right. Still, it’s nice to have you working on it. Saves me a lot of time and effort. If my mother was here, I could have asked her to do it but odds are she would have said no. At least until you pulled out that damn token.”

He didn’t reply, seeing that the blade he was crafting was almost ready to be hammered again.

“So tell me, what are the chances that everything I want to do will work?”

Buwingrid began to stroke the beard on her chin and shrugged.

“Honestly… I know it’s possible. There are a few crafters from my world with a skill as high as yours regarding Elemental Weapon crafting. The cores are rare as most can’t afford the cost to simply throw at a weapon unless you have someone gifted with that skill. Anyone with that skill can charge whatever they want. It is one of the reasons why I was able to come here and set up shop. You are extremely fortunate to have acquired so many.”

“Kill a dragon, harvest their body,” Max replied. “Seems like everyone is happy to trade for them.”

Buwingrid snorted and nodded as she glanced up at the ceiling.

“There are only stories of dragons on my world. All the ones that were there are now gone. Terrible stories about how they ravaged the land and destroyed so many, all in pursuit of gold and gems.”

He listened to her tell a story about one, getting another round of hammering in before he had to put the weapon head back in the coals.

“What are your thoughts about dragons?”

She spat and frowned.

“I’ve lived on this world for a while, and Igarra and I had an understanding. Knowing now that she was a true dragon upsets me a little bit. Dragonkin can be bad enough and most are extremely powerful. It seemed weird and impossible sometimes to believe one had grown to her level of strength, but then again, those who are strong continue to get stronger.”

“So you’re not a fan of them?”

A sigh came from Buwingrid as she studied Max for a moment, glancing at the weapon head resting in the coals, slowly turning a shade of orange as the heat was absorbed by it.

“I’m not a fool to believe a dragon is simply after gold or gems. Someone like me doesn’t get to where I am without studying and researching. There are lots of rumors about where their power comes from. If one manages to kill a dragon with the right person around, they could search for a power source inside them and make something great from it or trade it for a vast amount of money.

“Part of me was surprised to learn that Igarra didn’t have one.”

Clearing his throat, Max frowned.

“What?”

He looked at the blade and then back at the weapon smith.

“Let me do another round of this, and then I’ll tell you what I know.”

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Buwingrid hadn’t moved from the chair she had taken from storage, slowly twirling the ends of her beard between her fingers.

“You know everything I know about dragons; now you can understand how I feel about them. Some are evil like humans or dwarves can be. Others are also kinder and more gracious. The two with me are unique and are part of my family.”

“Still… to have two dragons following you. That is… unheard of. What my Queen would offer you for one… a large portion of her kingdom would be considered a small gift, especially if the red one you described is as big as you say.”

“And yet, that’s not what I’m offering.”

“Oh I know,” she replied, her face slightly red. “Still, you are an unusual person. That is one of the main reasons why I am happy to work with you on what you request. It also explains why Igarra would come in and commission weapons I never saw used in any fight. To know she was eating them to gain power…”

“How many worlds have you been to?” Max asked as she trailed off.

“Been to? Besides my own and this one?”

Rolling his eyes, he bobbed his head.

“Close to maybe twenty?”

“Why so many?”

“Part of it was the payment for the skills I learned and the training I was given. I had to spend time serving the armies, crafting weapons, and doing grunt work in forges. Don’t get me wrong, it was a good trade. No part of me wants to be on the front line facing the monsters my people have to fight. My mother earned her power the same way and stayed in longer than some, gaining a higher commission and access to greater skills. She will be excited to see what I have gained from this bargain.”

“So she’s a godly ranked crafter?”

Grinning, Buwingrid shrugged.

“That’s not for me to say, but know that if she ever feels you are worthy of her hammer, there are few in our world or many of the ones I have been to that can compare. Part of the reason she isn’t here right now is because our Queen summoned her. I expect her to return in a month or two.”

She could be a potential ally in the days to come. Even if you cannot gain a skill that high, she could craft what we desire if we were willing to trade that token.

I guess if there is no other way, it will have to be done. For now I think we at least have time before we must decide on that. In the meantime, I'll gladly use it to get a dwarf to help me as often as possible.

Spoken like a true villain.

Pulling the weapon head he had stored, Max set it back in the coals, watching as the flames rose, sparks coming off as he buried it inside.

"Well, I guess we need to get back to work. I need to do a few other things before this fight."

Buwingrid stood and stored her chair.

"Be safe. This new champion… He isn't like Igarra, but I haven't seen a weapon cut him yet. Every strike has bounced off his skin."

"Are you saying this is a foe I might not be able to defeat?"

Drumming her fingers on the stone table she was near, the weaponsmith didn't reply for almost ten seconds.

"You're smart, and you know that just because something is smaller than a different being doesn't mean it is weaker. We also haven't seen *Lora* Kazrak use any skills. Every fight has been him simply overpowering his enemies with speed and strength. Those axes… I would bet a chest full of tokens that they are cursed."

"I saw that replay of his battle against the arachnoid challenger. It was as if they absorbed light."

Buwingrid nodded.

"There are many ways to guess what a weapon does by the aura it gives off. For a weapon to visually look like that in such a way means they are powerful. Which means you're facing an enemy you have no clue about. You had ideas on what Igarra could do. Your size and speed also allowed you the ability to mitigate some of her power.

"Unlike many who would have to stand still and let her breathe fire on them, unable to get away, you could dodge it, and it appeared you could teleport around her. I do not doubt that Kazrak will have studied every replay of your fights and asked everyone who knows anything about you regarding your true potential."

"Which is why Jazzjak and Quilazmore are still alive."

"Another sign of how smart he is. Keeping those who know things about you and being able to threaten their families allows him to ensure their obedience. Which is why you quickly hid your friends."

Max turned and looked at the glowing orange metal in the coals and took his tongs, pulling it out of the flames and setting it down on the anvil.

“I guess then I’ll need to see what I can learn about him. For now, thank you again for this.”

Waving his gratitude away with a hand, she moved toward the area where she had been working. “Just finish that. I’ll get to work on what I need to take care of. We still have a lot of things to accomplish.”

Turning all of his attention to the metal that would house a large amount of magic, Max blocked out the rest of the world, lost in thoughts about what the fight might be like.

***

“Everything is ready for you,” Buwingrid said as she studied the finished blade. “I’m impressed as always by what you do. Now comes the hard part. How do we want to do this?”

“You’re certain that a weapon can house more than four elements?”

“I’ve seen it done before, but it’s rare. Beyond the amount of skill it takes and the cost of the cores, most wouldn’t dream of doing something like that. The stats are prized but the risk is far beyond what most are willing to take.”

She is right. Do we need to risk so much? If it fails, the weapon will be destroyed, leaving you with just the hammer you made for Fowl.

Perhaps… but we’re combining two different systems. If we can make all this work, think of the potential of another skill. Buwingrid said that this is how many of the dwarves who are crafters, like herself, gain those skills. It is why they are more than happy to move between systems and learn. It is how she has thirteen skills.

I’ll do everything I can to make this successful. So I am ready whenever you are.

“Nothing ventured, nothing gained,” Max replied. “You go first. I’ll go after you.”

***

Max let out the breath he had been holding in as Buwingrid finished her part of this gamble.

Learning that she possessed the metal element had made him a bit jealous, wondering what she could do with it, even if the skill was uncommon.

This is just another thing to add to the list of skills I want to acquire from shards, if possible, while we’re here.

That is one of the things I like about you, Max. Here we are, risking all the time we have to craft a weapon most would never attempt, using a gigantic portion of our materials you’ve saved, and all you can think about is what

the next skill you’re going to acquire will be. It’s also another sign that you believe you’ll come out on top of this next fight.

He chose to ignore Bob’s statements, knowing it was a compliment but also a slight at the same time, instead focusing on the next task.

Wiping the small bead of sweat from her brow, Buwingrid stood and motioned to the weapon, a bladed staff held in place by two vices.

“The rest is up to you. I’ve used everything that I believe this weapon can be enchanted with that won't interfere with what you’re going to attempt. Go slow.”

Smiling, Max nodded and motioned to the small metal chest she had resting on the bench nearby.

“I’ll owe you for this one.”

“Yes… yes, you will.”

Moving a few feet away, she retrieved the chair she had sat in earlier and plopped down on it.

Pulling a pair of gloves from storage he had acquired from her, Max opened the lid and gazed at the core inside.

Wood… who knew.

***

You need not to push your luck. It’s giving feedback already, and you barely managed to get it to accept the last core.

His hands trembled, and Max shook them, trying to shake out the sensation running up and down his arms as well.

“For a second, I thought I was about to endure a feedback explosion. That is not what I want to be part of,” Buwingrid stated as she moved back from the corner of the room she had been standing.

“How bad was it?”

“You saw where I was, right?”

Nodding, he couldn’t deny the concern Bob had or her reaction.

The lightning core had almost erupted in his hand. It had fought against him the entire time, trying to push itself away and immediately pull itself closer as he held on with every ounce of strength.

All his magical equipment except his boots and pants were removed and stored, the weapon having reacted badly when he had done the stone core before the lightning one.

Just wait for a moment. Catch your breath and consider what we have done. This weapon has a metal, wood, fire, sand, ice, stone, and lightning core. Do you believe we can force an air one into it?

Frustrated, Max couldn't ignore the doubts both the dwarven weapon crafter and his skill had, yet inside him was a desire to try for one more.

As he stood there, silent for a while, he sensed Buwingrid move toward him.

"So what are you going to do?" she asked.

7(1) Chapter 416 - Going All In

1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2190103/chapter-416-going-all-in**;COPY_OK[2025-04-10 15:22],[Fav2025-04-10 15:21],[word2025-04-10 15:21],[publish2025-04-10 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-10 15:02]**

Chapter 416 - Going All In

We have two air skills. One is for Elemental Mastery, and the other is for Wind Control. Do you still not feel that those would provide us the best chance to succeed with that core? It's why we saved it for the last out of everything.

He could sense Bob considering this topic again, unsure of which direction his skill would go about this topic. There was an element of excitement similar to the one he felt coming through their bond. Yet, at the same time, it was one of concern, like the quiet voice of one's conscience warning them about their actions.

We put this one at the end of the list because we both knew it had the highest chance of success. I have a few ideas on how to try and help it if we attempt this path. Just know I am out of ideas if this fails. There might be a small window where we can stop and not ruin everything, but if we pass that moment, our only option will be to move forward and risk losing it all.

So either we forge ahead, attempting to create an elemental weapon with eight shards, knowing that we will succeed in doing what even Buwingrid thinks is almost impossible, or we fail so badly it could destroy her shop.

With no concern about how it would injure us in the process.

Please. We could survive that blast.

Sure. But doing so might mean we use up our Negate Death Blow ability. Is that how you really want to go into the fight for your life?

Frustration continued to grow as the skill that so often pushed him to take risks like this tried to hold him back. Max understood why. Every scenario that might happen played out. Yet here they were with a chance to gain a new crafting skill possibly, almost assured if he succeeded, according to Buwingrid.

Bob was right about not wanting to use his Negate Death Blow skill if something went bad. Gaining power in the tower had been slow compared to the killing of Riniya, and he knew that using energy stored for the evolution of Consume bothered his friend.

Minutes ticked by as neither the red-headed dwarf beside him nor his skill gave any more advice or shared their opinion.

“Do you believe in luck?” Max asked after turning to face his host.

“What?”

“Do you believe in luck? Do you think the gods sometimes direct our paths or help us succeed?”

Buwingrid huffed and shrugged, not bothering to uncross her arms as she continued to lean against the table she rested against.

“That’s a trap if I’ve ever heard one. Of course, I believe that Ockrim will help me. To admit anything else would be considered heresy by many of my kind. Yet do I think we’re about to see if the gods are involved in your life for a moment like this…”

She sucked wind in through her teeth, stopping after a few seconds and then blew it all out.

“If you feel that somewhere out there are gods who want to see you succeed, then believe it. Right now, I don’t want to be responsible in any way for the path you take. If something I say causes you to push on and lose everything, I will feel that weight forever on my shoulders. Likewise, if you stop and almost win, barely losing this fight because the weapon failed, then I will wonder if I persuaded you to have a better tool for this fight.”

Nodding, he pulled the emblem that Ockrim had given him and watched as her eyes immediately locked upon it.

“This side, I go for it,” Max said as he tapped the picture of the god. “The other, I don't.”

Without waiting for her response, he flipped it upward, almost laughing as she leaned forward, uncrossing her arms and seemingly prepared to reach out and snatch it from the air.

He let it fall to the ground as it descended, choosing not to catch it lest he used his speed and ability to grab it a certain way and force the final outcome.

It struck the floor. Each time it plinked and bounced, a high-pitched sound came, forcing the eyes of dwarf and man to stay fixed upon it.

Slowly, it stopped its tumbling, wobbling back and forth as it settled on the worked stone beneath it.

“I guess that settles it,” Max said, bending over and plucking the large coin-like emblem from the ground, the face of the dwarven god looking up at him.

A chuckle came from Buwingrid after he stored it; her attention no longer fixated upon that item.

“You have the biggest pair I’ve seen in a while,” she stated, moving away from where Max stood and back to the corner she had been at earlier. “Let’s see if Ockrim does love you.”

***

It felt like buckets of sweat were pouring down every inch of his skin as Max held on to the core with both hands.

He could feel Bob struggling to control the flow of magic as he attempted to combine two skills into one. Each operated differently and yet the same. Part of that provided a degree of compatibility while the other side seemed to create walls of air which stopped the flow he was trying to keep steady.

As one, each faced a different struggle. Max’s was physical, holding a small ball of air that attempted to be free like a tornado. Bob struggled to control large gusts of wind, which buffeted not only the weapon held tight between two vices but also the air that swirled around them, attempting to shift the man wielding it.

Time seemed to stretch on, and Max knew there wasn’t any way to return. The core was connected to the blade and the last section of the weapon was not infused with an elemental path. Next to where he worked was the sand one, each having been placed a certain way to help balance the power and hopefully offset the chance for two cores to conflict.

We need to slow down! It’s coming to the point when we will see if this works!

His head throbbed as Bob shouted at him.

Sound filled his ears and Sonar skill as the wind raced around them, and he used the tool to move along the blade slowly.

Power seeped inside and then threatened to cut itself off, each time attempting to push his hand away or tear the core free.

His stance was one where he balanced himself as much as possible, watching mana pour from his chest, down his arms, out his fingers, and through the wind dervish in his hands.

How… much… longer?

It was hard to think. His brain felt exhausted, and this last moment took far longer and required more energy and mana than he had expected.

Soon! Hold the distance. Repeat the runes once more! We are close.

Bob’s words felt like a salve against his tired being. Every ounce of him was being drained for this, and he couldn’t let his mind wander. There wasn’t a second he could look away lest his hand slip the slightest and ruin everything.

Seconds ticked by, and then, another minute later, as his hand moved slowly, the tool he held pressed against the core, touching the spot where each rune had been etched.

Two more!

Max had to take a deep breath, and his arm started to shake like it had with the lightning core.

A tremor threatened to ruin everything.

[Bulwark]

Bob activated the skill, and Max immediately felt himself become centered, his feet unmoving and his body locked in.

With a grunt, he moved forward, hand drawing the rune he had been on, watching as the power and mana of the orb and his being flowed together.

One left!

The last one was larger than the other and had more twists and lines, yet Max did everything he could to remain calm, tracing them as quickly as possible, knowing there was a limited amount of time before his skill expired and the reality of what he was doing would hit.

With a small line left, the notification came and his body felt the force of the storm he was surrounded by hit.

[Skill Reset]

[Bulwark]

It was just a fraction of a moment, so fast many would never be able to know what had happened. Between the time his body flashed that the skill had ended and then glowed again because Bob had reset and activated it once more, there was only the slightest delay.

Yet his hand moved then, and everything began to fall apart.

His fingers felt like they would be ripped to shreds, the core spinning in his hand.

[Regeneration]

FIGHT IT! FINISH IT!

He felt additional support as the stone began to form up around him, holding his forearms in place as the magic of the weapon and core rejected each other.

Inside him, Bob fought with everything he had, pouring mana into this process, all while using his Stone Mastery to give aid. He did everything possible to help keep Max’s hand close to the last inch that needed to be etched.

Like pushing a boulder the size of a moon up a cliff, Max continued the impossible task, ignoring the pain in his hand and body.

Energy erupted from all over, and his mind felt like it was being stung by a thousand bees, each one upset with him about something.

Seconds ticked by as he slowly moved the tool along the last rune mark, feeling Bob drain the mana inside him dry.

And then everything went silent.

Gone was the noise.

His body and hand no longer felt like they would tear themselves apart from each other.

The air core that had been present was gone, extinguished as if it had never been breathed.

His lungs ached, and his eyes watered.

Slowly, his vision returned, and his Sonar overcame the pain it had been enduring, some of the problems his brain had suffered under.

Glancing around the room, he saw things scattered everywhere. Tools and anything else not clamped down or extremely heavy were now lying far away.

In the corner, emerging from behind a shield, was Buwingrid, eyes wide as she stared at him.

He looked down at the weapon, watching as blood dripped from his fingers, the flesh that had once been there strewn over the room, now not a single injury present.

The blade sat there, covered in blood, silent.

We… you did it.

No! You were right the first time. We did it. I… I need to sit.

It took a second, but Max pulled a chair out and quickly allowed himself to collapse into it. A waterskin followed, and then a piece of jerky as he stared at the weapon.

“You… you did it,” Buwingrid said, her voice low and almost a whisper as she came to where he was. “For a moment… I thought…”

Instead of talking, her hand clamped down on his shoulder, and she squeezed.

“I guess Ockrim does love you.”

Chuckling, he let out a sigh and looked up at the ceiling.

“If you can hear me, Ockrim, thank you!” he shouted, causing the dwarf beside him to groan.

“It doesn’t work that way you fool. You have to go to the temple and offer a real gift.”

“Perhaps he’ll be okay if I wait till I’m back home unless there’s a place here for him.”

“Oh nothing like that here. Remember, no gods were allowed but one. Now, there isn’t one at all,” she replied. “Still… you need to finish this. I can’t wait to hear what power this contains.”

Max grinned and took one last drink from his waterskin before storing it and standing. Looking around, he saw her holding out a cloth for him and smiled.

“Thanks, I think mine is somewhere in here.”

Grunting, the dwarf frowned.

“Yeah… someone… who isn’t me is going to have to clean all this up in a moment.”

Max didn’t care that he would soon be doing manual labor. Instead, he took the cloth she offered and began to wipe down the weapon, allowing the last bit of the process to complete.

And then the notification appeared, causing him to drop the cloth.

8(1) Chapter 417 - A New Creation

1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2192708/chapter-417-a-new-creation;**COPY_OK[2025-04-14 11:18],[Fav2025-04-11 16:31],[word2025-04-14 11:45],[publish2025-04-11 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-11 15:02]**

Chapter 417 - A New Creation

[System Error]

[Weapon Crafted Beyond Normal Expectations]

[Skill Lacking]

[Skill Conversion in Process]

[…]

[…]

[…]

[Skill Requirements Met]

[New Skill Learned]

[System Is Modifying Skill to Current World]

[Skill Acquired - Weapon Crafting Ultimate Elemental Affinity]

[Skill Rank Calculating]

[…]

[…]

[…]

[Current Skills Are Too High for Calculation]

[Rank Exceeds Starting Parameters]

[Rank Set to Uncommon]

[50 Experience Gained]

[Experience Split With Buwingrid]

[New Weapon Created]

[Legendary Blade Spear Crafted]

[…]

[Weapon Meets Requirements]

[Please Name Legendary Weapon]

Max felt his hand tremble for a second as he bent down and picked up the cloth he had dropped, setting it on the bench.

With the other he carefully ran it along the rune-etched wood shaft that Buwingrid had worked on for half a day.

The markings and slight grooves felt perfect, each one cut just enough to lend aid in one's grip yet not so deep they would bite into one’s fingers.

“I… I got a notification of experience and what we made,” the dwarf said, her voice quieter than usual. “Have… have you identified it yet?”

Shaking his head, Max took a deep breath and slowly let it out.

[*Inspect Weapon*]

*****

* Legendary Blade Staff

+ 200 STR/DEX/CON

+ 10% Elemental Control

+ 10% Elemental Resists

+ 10% Elemental Damage

+ 10% Mana Regen

Shape Shifting - The weapon may conform to any melee weapon as the wielder desires. No cooldown between the transforming of shape. Density and weight will remain the same and that is the only limit to what it can transform to.

Elemental Burst - Each successful attack conveys an elemental effect upon the target. Weapon will automatically attempt to determine the best element to strike with.

Ultimate Legendary Weapon - This weapon may be named as the pinnacle of what can be crafted at the legendary rank of weapon crafting. Upon naming it, the weapon will form a bond with the user. It may evolve into a sentient weapon after it has been bathed in enough blood. Know when this weapon is named, it shall be shared with all those on the world it is named.

* May Evolve

*****

His hand gripped the shaft, and Max was thankful it was still clamped in the vices as he stood there, leaning against it, trying to fathom what he had just read.

We have achieved… something most would never imagine possible in their life.

“Soooo?”

Buwingrid’s question and tone brought him back to the moment, and he turned to face her, smiling as he moved to where the closest vice was and undid it.

“How about I let you inspect it for yourself?”

“It’s not bonded?”

“Not yet,” he replied with a grin, moving to the last vice and freeing the weapon. Feeling a little foolish at the care in which he handled it, knowing it could smash mountains without a scratch, he held it out to her.

The dwarf slowly came to where he was and put her hand on the shaft, immediately forming a fist as she gripped it and almost stumbled.

Her eyes were like large coins, and she was blinking rapidly as her face stretched upward.

“Impossible!” she gasped. “This… this is what I’ve worked toward my whole life!”

“And we did it. Together.”

He felt a tug from her and without hesitating, let go, watching as she brought the shaft to her lips and kissed it.

Buwingrid then gave it a twirl, the large blade staff transforming as it did into a sword, the black metal blade growing in length as the shaft shrunk, forming a handle and hilt.

Next it became a massive battle axe, and then a two-handed hammer, and finally returned to its initial creation.

With a sigh, she held it out to him and smiled.

“I… I also got a skill. I’m guessing you did as well?”

Max felt his eyebrows raise at the knowledge not only had she acquired a share of the experience but that she had gained a skill as he did.

“I did. Ultimate Elemental Affinity?”

A groan escaped her mouth as he took the weapon from her.

“Gods… Ockrim must love you more but no… mine is simply Advanced. For you to have jumped to Ultimate…” Buwingrid shook her head as she paused, her right eyebrow rising. “What rank?”

“Uncommon.”

Grinning, she bobbed her head.

“Well that is good. Most would be happy for a common rank as the skill can grow, increasing the chance for success as you make something like that. Had it been rare or higher, I would have probably quit this life and become a baker or something.”

Rolling his eyes, Max felt how perfect the weight seemed and wondered what he should do about naming it.

We should hold off on it for now. Without knowing what will happen, it would be best not to announce to the world that something like this has been created just yet. Especially before the fight.

True… no point giving Kazrak a heads up about this.

With a smile, he tapped the butt of the shaft against the stone floor and leaned against it.

“So tell me, Buwingrid. What is a good name for a weapon like this?”

Her silver eyes sparkled as she grinned.

“Oh, I can think of a few.”

***

After cleaning up the shop, Max sat in a corner, eyes closed, trying to meditate and consider the battle to come.

He knew he could sneak into the property, using his stealth and most likely would be able to make it back to his friends without being followed, but that risk didn’t seem worth it.

Buwingrid had shared the little she knew about his opponent and even after doing a few tests with the weapon, Max wasn’t sure what this fight would be like.

Could we use the same trick as with Riniya?

We wouldn't have an idea without knowing how strong or fast Kazrak is. Besides, what happens if most of his power comes from his physical side rather than his skills? It appears that his body is always metallic, meaning it wouldn’t suddenly vanish.

And if I lose the element of surprise, he won’t go near that place again, making it worthless as well.

Then there are those weapons. Part of me is nervous, and while I have been able to mitigate many of the afflictions and status effects that have been placed upon us, the odds of me being able to do so quickly are probably low.

You didn’t have a problem clearing my attacker flag over and over when I was doing what I did against Terrance.

That is because I had already cleansed it once, and the variation of it wasn’t a big deal. It is like fighting a creature that doesn’t ever change its tactics. You can defeat it faster each time.

And if this is something new and much stronger…

Then, it will be more challenging the first time.

So he is fast, strong, immune to most weapons, and has a pair that inflicts both damage and debuffs. What else?

I’m assuming that this battle will be fought in a neutral environment. If I had to guess it would be an open area of dirt, and probably not that wide. Unlike Igarra who didn’t know your true power or abilities, she chose a battlefield that seemed best for her.

The stone and rocks were allies to you and the high ceiling of the arena chosen gave you the space to maneuver. While I’m not certain what limits can be imposed, it would most likely be something that plays into Kazrak’s power.

You don’t believe our allies will attempt to change it in our favor?

Bob remained silent for a moment, and Max was content to wait, finding peace in the silence of the spot he was resting. Finally, his skill spoke.

We should not depend upon that assistance. While I have no doubt they are loyal to you in some way, their entire life is built upon the concept of the strongest and those who will allow them to become stronger.

Each of them has played the part they must to survive and that will mean selling out everything they can about you while holding back what is possible in case you win. This isn’t about them not being your friend or ally, but instead a worldview.

Jazzjak told you long ago that he and his wife were okay with killing the other if it meant the survival of their children. While you might be considered powerful and an ally, he would easily sacrifice you for his children as well.

Do you think then that I should check where I stored our friends?

No. First if they did give that position away, then it hurts them in some ways. If they give up everything, Kazrak will know they will do the same about him. Also, if that position was known, we would be too late to act, and anything we did would only potentially bring them harm. Besides, I would pity whoever came and found Aerthen waiting for them.

Allowing himself a small laugh, Max saw that scenario play out.

Perhaps having two dragons there when we arrived will help to cause some concern for Kazrak. I have no doubt that was not part of what he imagined.

So all we can do now is wait.

Which is slowly killing me… this is worse than when we were trapped in Ezreal's cell. At least there I wasn't sure what was going to happen. Right now I'm completely aware of what is going to take place.

Sometimes knowledge is complex.

Lost in his thoughts, Max's mind wandered, and he considered dozens of things that had been on his mind lately.

If we end up in the tower here, I assume it's pointless beyond the hope of loot. We don't even know if there are bosses or whatever.

Most likely you'll have to start on the first floor as well. I doubt we would start on the upper ones. While it might be a good place to farm reagents for crafting, we would most likely just waste time outside of experience and potential loot and boss drops.

And what about Rakonath? Could a place like that be beneficial for him? In a world like this? I know you don't know and can sense your frustration with this line of questions again, but if he was to defeat and kill creatures in this world, would the system that is in place here help him get stronger faster?

We still do not know his true power. Would you say he is as strong as a level fifty adventurer from your world? Could he defeat a team of adventurers? If I was honest, I'm not certain that he could. We haven't even seen him use a breath weapon yet, and I doubt his flying skills are up to the task.

You know as well as I do that Aerthen is his best hope at getting stronger. She will manage him and teach him how to do what he must do. It may be a long time before he can go hunting with us at all.

Grunting, Max nodded.

And that brings me back to one last question…

You need to win first. I am glad you expect to always come out on top, but nothing else matters if you do not survive this fight. How can Everett help this world if you die? How will Rakonath grow stronger if you're dead? The child that is inside Tanila will most likely never be born and those dwarves that you love will find themselves a treat for someone.

If you do not survive this battle, everything you have fought for over a year is pointless. Use that as motivation to not fall.

The truth of what Bob said lit a fire inside his core.

Opening both eyes, Max stood and moved to the area where he had practiced with his new weapon earlier.

Without waiting, he began to move through different techniques, knowing that every battle to come would have stakes like this one.

9(1) Chapter 418 - A Weapon Named

1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2195728/chapter-418-a-weapon-named**;COPY_OK[2025-04-14 11:16],[Fav2025-04-14 11:14],[word2025-04-14 11:19],[publish2025-04-12 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-12 15:02]**

Chapter 418 - A Weapon Named

The bell sounded, and Max made his way to the area he knew had a teleporter in his box.

It felt weird, standing in the white-walled room, listening to the sounds of the spectators that filled the arena Igarra had constructed.

A countdown was displayed on the screen, each second ticking by slowly as he waited.

Finally, only a minute remained, and the sound of the stone door appearing and moving alerted him to the presence he knew.

Surprise came as both the dark elf and vorpal bunny walked through side by side.

"Max… the time has come," Jazzjak said as his nose twitched. "I wish you luck in today's fight."

He could see there was a well-practiced mask now keeping any emotion but the slightest shifting of his nose. Like the first time they had met so many months ago, the rabbit was experienced with the need not to give away how he felt.

He tried not to smile too much at the outfit the rabbit wore. A yellow jacket with green embroidered designs covered his chest, and a pair of shimmering black pants seemed almost alive with every movement of his body.

“I shall send you to the arena floor when the timer ends,” Quilazmore informed him as he moved to where the portal would appear. “No matter what happens, know it has been an honor.”

“And my friends?”

The dark elf’s lips curled slightly into a smile and then vanished, the briefest display of something Max often struggled to read.

“Can find a way from here… provided they were to leave quickly.”

Holding out his hand, Max smiled.

“Thank you.”

Clearing his throat, Quilazmore hesitated a second before shaking it and then pointing at the spot on the floor Max needed to move.

“Any information about what I’m going to be fighting in?”

Both of the ones he had called friends glanced at each other, and then Jazzjak hopped a little bit closer.

“A wasteland. Good luck, Max.”

Without another word, the vorpal bunny hopped out of the room, leaving the dark elf dressed in an all-black outfit.

“Remember,” Quilazmore said as he watched the clock, the last three seconds about to be gone. “No matter where we are, someone is watching.”

He snapped his fingers, and the portal appeared beneath Max, and the crowd roared.

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Standing there, he laughed, not caring what Kazrak or the crowd must have thought as he gazed at the arena area they would fight in.

You were absolutely correct. However, I wasn’t expecting white dirt.

It’s better for the crowd. Blood should show up with ease.

“Do you find my appearance humorous?” his opponent shouted, his voice carrying across the fifty yards that stood between them.

Shaking his head, Max just smiled. “No… though a metallic wolfkin isn’t something I had ever imagined gazing upon.”

“I am not,” Kazrak growled, “a wolfkin! I am one of the few who are a descendant of my god, Liulfr! He is the one who told me I should come here and claim this world for

him. Soon, many more from my pack shall make this place our home and transform this world into one the strong thrive on!”

He seems like a fanatic…

If his god told him to come here… this has piqued my curiosity. To think that they directed his path here makes me wonder why.

Groaning, Max tried to ignore the sensation coming from Bob as his skill seemed enthralled at the idea that some god or gods were taking part in this world for a specific reason.

“Tell me, if I offered you a truce and told you all I seek is the protection of those of this world and not requiring so many to die, would you accept it?”

A howl that he knew was laughter carried across the patch of white dirt. The large metallic body, which Max now realized had only a loincloth covering any part of his fur, shook like real fabric.

“What kind of coward calls for a truce unless they see that which stands before them is too much to overcome!?”

The fifteen-foot-tall opponent did look intimidating even without him holding any weapons yet. Still the way in which he talked and the attitude he took was not what Max had expected.

“No Kazrak, I just prefer not to have to kill any more than I have to. Unlike some, I don’t enjoy ending the lives of others unless I must. Just ask Igarra… oh wait… you can’t because I killed her.”

A scowl formed on the wolf’s face as he glared at Max. Even his eyes were silver. Sharp metallic teeth seemed to be grinding together from the noise from his sonar skill.

“She was a fool, and I am not one,” Kazrak replied. “Now then, are you ready so that I can end your life? Entertain me, and I shall allow your friends to leave this world mostly untouched.”

The snarl that had appeared was evident from this distance, and Max felt the fire that had been burning in his chest flare up.

With his weapon appearing in his hand, Max tapped the butt of the shaft against the ground, seeing that it took his full strength and didn’t seem to buckle or give way under his strike.

That will minimize the damage done to this environment. It seems they prepared for that.

Kazrak motioned with a hand, and then both of his axes appeared.

“The time has come! Everyone make some noise for the one you placed a bet on!”

Max was surprised by just how much sound made it through the barrier, and he looked up to see that every spot was filled.

The number of spectators watching today appears to be far more than last time.

With his new skill, Max could hear his name and Kazrak's being shouted from all around.

"Our Champion Lord Kazrak has withstood every challenger without breaking a sweat! Can he repeat this against Ifrit!? There is only one minute left before the fight that over five thousand worlds are currently watching will begin! Finish placing those bets!"

A timer appeared, and he ignored it, not needing to watch it, his mind already knowing exactly when it would end.

The spot where he stood prevented him from moving. No matter what he tried it wasn't something he could break free from, and using either Blink or Demonic Teleportation to attempt to do so wasn't going to help.

Rules... but we're ready for what comes next.

We have all the time in the world.

Standing there, preparing to fight for his life and the lives of his friends, Max felt a calm come over him.

He rolled his eyes as Kazrak roared and snarled at him, both axes twirling around the wolf's sides.

With just ten seconds to go, Max started to laugh, still standing there like he was going to take a walk through a park. The slightest shift in his opponent's stance came as the announcer made his final announcement.

"The time has come! Whose blood shall stain this ground!?"

Max made his first move as the last seconds were about to tick away.

[Name Weapon - Sunder - Selected]

[Confirm Weapon Name - Sunder]

[Y/N]

Max selected yes mentally and smiled as the notification appeared.

[Sunder has been crafted. A weapon of Legendary Quality has been born.]

His weapon shimmered, light erupting from it, and Max held it slightly forward, watching as Karzak reacted to both its appearance and the notification.

Max's other action was his left hand slicing his right arm open.

[Demonic Summoning]

Blood gushed from the wound, and time slowed, the cascading effect of the kaleidoscope forming again.

The fiery rune that appeared midair before him seemed smaller, still the same and as its flames died down, a purple door formed before him. Max could sense something different.

Is he okay? Everything seems the same but… almost like a shadow of its former self.

We are about to find out. The door is opening.

According to Bob's words, the door swung open, revealing the same throne room as last time.

Standing before the door was a misshapen beast, a collection of sewn parts of various demons.

It took great effort not to wince, seeing the rope-like sutures that held the pieces of flesh together. Another set of purple ropes was wound all over, apparently supporting the abomination.

"Maaaax."

A shudder ran through his spine, the recognition that Sog'thollech's voice had come from the three mouths scattered over the body.

"Are… are you okay?"

Slowly the demon shambled forward a few steps, the seven eyes all moving about as it took each step.

"I am alive… barely… Are we…"

Each pained set of words seemed to take effort as the demon stopped on the threshold, turning slightly and peering past the domain.

"No… please… do not make me venture forth… I will not survive against him."

"Kazrak?"

"Yes… he is… strong. I couldn't damage him. Nothing I did… he played with me… Thankfully, he didn't destroy my core. I managed to escape death, but it cost so much. For a whil,e I shall be like this… I need more time before I can… venture safely from here."

Max didn't care that he was approaching the portal that connected their two worlds, coming to a halt just a few feet from where his ally stood.

"Stay there then. Can you answer my questions about Kazrak? Is there anything you can tell me?"

Sog'thollech shuddered as he stood there.

"I do not… hopefully that blade of yours will do something. Mine did not. His axes are cursed. A weakness effect. Each cut adds another decrease. Soon, I could barely stand…"

Wincing, Max could sense Bob reacting as well.

If we are cut too many times, things will get increasingly tricky if I cannot purge the effect.

Which may take a while.

“How long did they last?”

A guttural chuckle followed by a groan and wheezing came from the demonic mass.

“I did not have a chance to see how long they were active. To him, I became a play toy. Something he kicked around till he was done, showing off to all who were watching the ease with which he defeated me.”

Max stood there, frustrated and anxious as he considered what he was learning.

If I get cut and the debuff hits, then what? Run?

That might be our best bet, given that we are in a limited space and all that matters is winning, no matter what the cost.

Can you resist the effect like you have with all the other abilities that have attempted to drain our power?

Without first experiencing it, I don’t have an answer to that. I would say yes if I knew it was weaker, but from what Sog’thollech tells us, it does not appear so.

His friend stood there, eyes darting all over, wheezing occasionally.

“Your skill… Bob. What is he saying?”

Clearing his throat, Max tapped the section of his arm that had healed.

“Don’t get cut, hope he can cleanse it if we do, and try not to die.”

Sog’thollech shook his head and for a moment it looked like he would tip over.

“This is not the time to play or joke. What you are facing is dangerous for different reasons. Part of me thinks that he could possibly have defeated Igarra.”

“Are you certain?” Max asked, fully aware of how his face didn’t hide his shock.

“If he could withstand the fire and attacks, all he would need to do is cut her. If he could stay close and continue to land strikes that injured the beast, I have no doubt he could win in time. Even worse, I’m certain he has other talents and skills, none of which I was worthy of seeing.”

Massaging his eyes, Max nodded and took a few steps back.

“Thank you, my friend. Be safe and try to heal. I’ll reach out when this is over.”

A groan came as Sog’thollech backed up slowly.

“I always enjoy your outlook on life. Thank you again for not forcing me to die. Twice now, you have proven that you see me as a friend. For that, I have no way of repaying you right now. Perhaps one day I can.”

Waving his hand, Max shook his head.

“Friends don’t owe each other. Until next time.”

As the door closed, Max lowered himself slightly, transforming his weapon into a sword and summoning his shield.

“I’m ready to dance, Bob. Don’t let me down.”

10(1) Chapter 419 – Outclassed 1)

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2198399/chapter-419-outclassed;**COPY_OK[2025-04-14 11:16],[Fav2025-04-14 11:16],[word2025-04-14 15:51],[publish2025-04-13 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-13 15:02]**

Chapter 419 – Outclassed

As the kaleidoscope world around Max shattered, the roar of the arena filtered through first, his eyes locked upon the wolf that was already moving.

You know the plan. Stay on the defense and only take openings you’re certain of. I’ll handle the harassing side.

He didn’t need to say a word, Bob already knowing he agreed as he assumed the stance Tom and Dexic had drilled into him hundreds of times.

Faster than any other opponent he had faced, Kazrak was upon him, and the improved stats he had from the weapon and a few items of clearing the tower floors paid off, allowing Max to parry and block both axes as they cleaved for different parts of his body.

[Regeneration]

His sword arm ached from the parry, having to take the brunt of the attack since his shield deflected the other strike.

The size difference between them was bothersome as Max was forced back a few steps, unable to stand against the blows that never stopped.

His skills struggled to keep up, and he immediately knew that Kazrak had a legendary ranked axe weapons mastery and a higher dual-wielding skill.

It was a struggle to protect himself, his shield skill not up to par with the attacks that never let up.

Frost Nova went off, followed by a Fire Nova. Neither seemed to affect the predator he was facing, a smile across his face as he used the reach and size to overwhelm Max.

“You’re good, but I’m better,” Kazrak growled. “Those spells aren’t going to do anything to me! Show me some real tricks! I know you have more!”

His taunts fell on deaf ears as Max skirted the dirt field they fought on, doing his best to keep moving at an angle lest he get pushed up against a barrier and find himself in trouble.

Stone boulders appeared in the air and more rocks were freed from his storage space as Bob continued to fight back, testing what limits the wolf might have and if there were any weak spots in his defenses.

Every stone that struck shattered against the silver body of Kazrak.

His skill continued to reshape the pieces, sending them at the wolf's eyes, trying to at least interfere with his vision.

Meanwhile, Max understood how different this fight was from that of Igarras.

She had been strong, but her size had limited her ability to stay on top of him like this. He had been able to use that to hide and maneuver away from her claws and mouth. Kazrak didn't have that weakness.

As the first minute rolled by, and Bob's lightning spell connected, causing the slightest slow down in the wolf's attack speed, they were well aware of why everyone who had faced this monster had died.

Give me a minute. Be ready.

Max sensed the spells as they went off, teleporting away, up into the air, landing on an ice spear, and jumping quickly to where an air one was before finding himself smacking into a barrier as he leaped up again.

The pain wasn't nothing, though the disorientation of the moment was.

We are in trouble.

His skill was right, landing on an air wall that appeared under him the moment his upward rise had been stopped.

An object streaked toward him, and his shield moved to where it was, catching and blocking the axe that had been thrown at him.

Move!

Everything happened so quickly it was almost impossible to know if Max moved on his own volition or with Bob's warning as the other axe came at his feet, destroying the perch he had been on.

With less than four inches to spare, he jumped onto an air spear and sped off around the low ceiling of the arena, seeing that after the axes had struck, they vanished, appearing in Kazrak's oversized hands.

They set this height at 100 yards… everything about this place is designed to box us in and limit our fighting.

Kazrak threw another axe at him, but it was easily dodged as Bob managed the movement of the spell, keeping them away as the wolf chased underneath.

We can’t stay here forever, and we both know he can jump up here at any moment. He is toying with us still.

Bob was right, the sound of laughter coming from below as their opponent never let both axes go simultaneously, sending one and having it reappear before sending another.

He isn’t leaving himself undefended, not that I’m certain we could do any damage to him. He is stronger than me. I believe he’s faster as well.

What’s worse is he is smart. He set a trap, and we were caught in it.

The game of wolf and man went on for minutes, and neither of them could do anything. Every spell Bob sent at their opponent was dodged, deflected, or simply tanked by the metallic body.

Each of Kazrak’s axe attacks was avoided, and eventually, the wolf moved to the center of the arena area and stood there, both weapons held at his sides and eyes locked on him.

“I was worried you might do something like this!” their opponent shouted. “So I’ll tell you right now, in a few hours, the arena will shrink, continually growing smaller until there is nowhere for you to fly around.”

Kazrak let out a long howl and then went silent, apparently content to bide his time.

Can that be true?

I don’t want to say no, but the truth is we didn’t spend the time or effort to learn about this world as we should have. You needed to return home to your friends. Any other visit was cut short for the same reason. Most likely, he is not lying, and we cannot risk it either way.

Well, let’s change things up.

Max swapped out for his legendary bow and started firing arrows at the wolf, seeing a slight reaction come from the beast as a solid string of arrows assaulted him.

After one slipped by his axes, which parried them, Kazrak put away one axe and held up his hand, protecting his eyes and allowing the rest of the arrows that were sent to shatter.

None of the magically created arrows even made a tiny scratch, and Max smiled as he continued the barrage, waiting for a moment he hoped might work.

[Empowered Ranged Attack]

[Arrow Volley]

One moment the enchanted arrow, formed by his bow, was speeding toward the boss, transformed into an empowered one and suddenly split into twenty, each of them streaking downward.

Kazrak reacted immediately, moving sideways and holding up his axe, which was still out.

Over half of the arrows were either dodged or blocked but it appeared at least four struck, the tiniest of damage noticeable as they pierced his skin barely before he swept a hand over where they were and caused the pieces to fall off.

“Impressive! You do have some tricks!”

Well, he can be hurt…

Not really. Each of those wounds is already healed. Yes, they went through, but it was nothing more than a nuisance. It's like a bee sting that one feels but does no real damage.

Still, if we go all out… I might be able to cut him.

And if he cuts you? If one attack gets through, we lose strength. For how long, I’m not certain.

Storing his bow and pulling his sword and shield back out, Max sighed, knowing Bob was right and their options continued to become less and less by the moment.

He’ll know about my ability to shrug off blows that would typically kill me. It’s uncommon, and we both know that part probably concerns him. So what could he really be trying to do? Test his weapons? See if he can wear me down? Slaughter me nonstop? Everything we’ve considered before is going exactly as we planned, except for the shrinking arena.

So you’re willing to go all out, and I’m willing to sacrifice the power I have… remember we cannot endure like we did with Igarra. We play smart, use our skills carefully, and try not to die.

That last part is one of my favorites. I guess we’ll see how this goes.

Summoning Fowl’s hammer, he took a deep breath and then jumped toward Kazrak.

A smile appeared on the wolf’s face as both axes as Max descended toward him.

“YES!”

As the wolf cried out, weapons moving to connect with the sword and hammer he wielded, Max couldn’t help but grin back.

[Ultimate Form]

[Berserker]

[Power Strike]

[Rampage]

[Magical Strike]

[Ghost Strike]

[Quick Attack]

[Intimidation]

[Demonic Teleportation]

The shout that came from his mouth didn’t affect his opponent, nor did he expect it would, but instead, it was a way for him to release some of the frustration and rage he felt.

Appearing behind Karzak as the black blades were about to bisect his growing body, Max swung with both weapons, watching as the wolf turned, already appearing to know what would happen next.

The silver body shimmered as both of his weapons connected, his newest one transforming into a hammer.

One moment the wolfkin had been towering over him, twice his size. Now when Max struck, both flat pieces of metal came downward, connecting against Kazrak’s shoulder blades due to his added size.

His opponent let out a grunt, stumbling forward as three attacks, all hitting faster than most could ever hope to dodge or see, connected.

In an instant, Kazrak was on one knee, a single axe bouncing across the dirt. He used a hand to catch himself from going face-first into the white dirt.

Beneath him, an indentation appeared from the force of what he had been hit with, and Max continued the assault as Bob did his part.

In that brief moment, his partner summoned a ball of lightning and used the moment to strike.

[Spell Burst]

Kazrak’s body began to twitch when the electrical energy struck, all while being assaulted by a never-ending barrage of hammer strikes to his lower back.

The sound of metal on metal rang out across the floor, and as the seconds flew by and Bob sent another bolt of lightning at their opponent, an eerie howl came from their opponent.

Around them the ground began to tremble and turn into a foggy mist.

Bob?

Keep going! Something is happening, and he is hurt.

True to his skills statement, there was blood on the white dirt. When the wolf had let out the howl, blood flew from his mouth, the first one to stain the arena floor.

In the span of four seconds, his weapons never stopped moving, and then everything changed.

A backhand came toward him, its speed now matching his own, and the damage that should have limited Kazrak’s movement seemed to have no effect.

Holding up Fowl’s hammer, he blocked the strike and was forced back a step as the fist crushed into it.

The green mist started to appear around them, and the wolf turned, eyes no longer silver but red, rage seeming to exude from them as he laughed, swinging the axe in his right hand.

Both weapons came together, parrying the attack, realizing they finally saw their opponent's real strength.

The offensive moment turned defensive as strikes came at them, easily twice as fast as before, the missing axe now in its rightful left hand, each one attempting to strike true.

Switching out Fowl’s hammer for his shield, Max felt the shift in the battle and then saw what was happening around him.

Nothing appeared on his sonar, yet in the green mist, shapes had appeared.

Over fifty different specters, all six-foot-tall images of wolfkins, turned toward him and started to attack.

With a swing of his hammer, Max connected, a loud wail coming when the creature started to dissolve, but when he tried to block another with his shield, it passed through it, touching his arm and sending a jolt of pain through it.

[Cursed]

[Atrophy Curse - Movement speed has been decreased.]

Move now!

While trying to jump upward and out of the way of both axes, another touched his back, pain coming through the contact.

[Cursed]

[Atrophy Curse - Movement speed has been decreased again.]

We need to—

I know!

Laughter came from his opponent's mouth, blood dripping down from the edges and the sharp canine teeth.

“Well done! Time to suffer!”

Kazrak’s right hand snaked out, the axe gone and snatched the bottom of his leg as he had lept upward.

[Harden Body]

[Bulwark]

[Armored Warrior]

Everything happened quickly as the wolf spun and slammed him into the ground.

As his body impacted, a small crater formed, yet he was given no time to rest in it and instead whipped upward and down again elsewhere, the wolf using the rebound of his body to speed the attack.

Bob!

I know!

11(1) Chapter 420 - Getting Smoked

1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2201010/chapter-420-getting-smoked**;COPY_OK[2025-04-14 15:50],[Fav2025-04-14 15:50],[word2025-04-14 15:53],[publish2025-04-14 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-14 15:02]**

Chapter 420 - Getting Smoked

His entire body hurt as he collided with the ground again, sometimes passing through another specter and seeing multiple notifications appear.

[Cursed]

[Atrophy Curse - Movement speed has been decreased again.]

[Cursed]

[Atrophy Curse - Movement speed has been decreased again.]

[Cursed]

[Atrophy Curse - Movement speed has been decreased again.]

[Cursed]

[Atrophy Curse - Minimum movement speed has been reached.]

Bob made his move as he was lifted and in mid-arc for another impact.

Lightning rain started falling from the sky, a cloud forming above. As bolts erupted around them, and a Fire Nove swept out in all directions, his skill activated the big one.

[Phasing]

His body careened through the air upward and away from Kazrak who it appeared, needed a moment to figure out what had happened.

Max saw the wolf look in his palm and almost chuckled except for the pain he felt all over as regeneration quickly took care of the damage he had sustained.

I think he thought perhaps my leg ripped off.

Focus! We're down our skills and hopefully his will wear off soon.

Bob used their Wind Control skill to right the direction they were traveling and get them in position to return to the fight.

An axe flew through his chest, crashing into the barrier above before vanishing and reappearing in the silver hand of his opponent.

"YES! MORE! SHOW ME MORE!"

Cheers could be heard after Kazrak finished shouting, waving both axes in the air as he took off in the direction they were in.

Distance meant nothing.

Max wondered if the crowd could even keep up with what was being shown on the displays. He could barely stay focused as Bob controlled their movements, keeping them out of reach of the wolf who continued to leap from the floor after him.

Axes were being thrown randomly, sometimes when Kazrak was in the air and other times when he was on the ground.

His sonar skill, combined with evasion and Bob's ability to react quickly, kept them safe from the attacks.

It's not wearing off! He's still fast!

With his berserker buff gone and only about thirty seconds left on his Ultimate Form, Max wondered just how long the wolf could stay in what was a berserker-like state.

Blood still dripped down the creature's mouth, and Max held up his shield, deflecting an axe throw, his hammer now a thick sword that deflected the attack that almost struck his leg.

He's too fast! I'm trying to cleanse this curse but can't, and we've lost like 20% of our movement speed. Even in the air and with the ability to fly, I'm draining mana, and we're going to have to land soon.

Can we fight him? I mean… if he is like this how do we defeat him?

He doesn't appear to be healing. I'm unsure if it's a choice he made or something else. There is no doubt, though, that he is in a berserker state, and I'm going to venture a guess that the more damage he takes, the worse this will get.

Worse?! Like faster and stronger than this?

No reply came as they worked together to block another set of attacks, a wall of air followed by a pair of wind blades striking Kazrak's lower legs as he hurtled toward them.

Having a second to spare, Max watched as the wolf hit the ground and rolled back on his feet in an instant, and came at him again.

[Consume has Partially Cleansed Atrophy Curse]

Finally… give me a moment.

The game of wolf and human was never-ending. Max's flight skill and the limited height of the arena, combined with the air walls and wind blades, bought time for Bob to do his thing.

It took another minute before Max felt a change in his movement.

[Consume has Fully Cleansed Atrophy Curse]

Immediately, he flew faster and the attempts by Kazrak to attack them were now extremely easy to dodge.

Okay… I should be able to do that much faster if he uses that ability again. Now we need to decide what to do next.

I can't win head to head can I?

Most likely, no… we still haven't been cut by his blades even when he had the chance to. It is most likely still because he is having fun. Look at his expression. His eyes are almost like a glowing red crystal and that is the most sadistic smile we have seen in a while.

His skill was right. It looked like Kazrak was enjoying all this, even after having suffered blows that hit hard enough to draw blood.

What if we instead don't fight and try to wait this out?

A trickle of consideration and humor filled his head and then for the first time in a while Bob's laughter reverberated inside his skull.

That thought of yours… it is… ingenious. Still we aren't sure if this place will actually shrink. It would be one way to win if it does and never stops.

Our options are limited and while I'd rather not display to everyone watching on all the worlds or in this arena, it would be better to show we are smart and strong.

Flying through the air, they worked together, each of them calculating the exact center of the arena.

That's the spot. All we need to do now is let old Wolfie miss, and we can set up shop there.

Max smiled, and he saw a slight shift in Kazrak's expression, both eyes narrowing slightly as he came at him again.

[Blink]

[Haste]

Having lured the wolf to the outer edges of the arena, they were at the center of it while his opponent was still in the air.

[Dimensional Space]

The door opened, and Max rushed inside, feeling the sensation that came as he turned and looked at his opponent.

A howl of anger filled the arena, and Kazrak stood just slightly outside the open doors, snarling and waving both weapons.

“A dimensional space?! No one mentioned that! I will cut off–”

“They didn’t know,” Max said as he held up his hand. “I’d prefer not to have shown so many people, but I’d rather win any way I can.”

“You… you!”

Blood sprayed from his opponent's mouth as he gnashed his teeth, not hiding his displeasure at all.

“Yup… it’s me. Now then, tell me, Kazrak, what will you do?”

He threw his weapon, which struck an invisible wall, falling to the ground.

“That won’t work,” Max said with a grin.

Another howl came and while his opponent let out whatever anger and rage filled him, Max took out a chair and set it on the stone floor, sitting and relaxing.

“I guess we’ll find out what happens to this arena space after all.”

For the first time since this fight started, Max saw Kazrak’s facade change and the wolf turned, glancing around the arena and quickly looking back at him through the open door.

“You… can’t be serious.”

“Oh, I am. If you’re right and the arena will continue to shrink and judging by how rapidly you’re blinking, this whole place will eventually cave in on itself. Tell me, can your body withstand that?”

Both axes moved so fast they blurred, even to Max, as they glowed red for a moment and then a bright purple color. None of those abilities did anything as the light-absorbing metal struck against a wall of nothing, bouncing back each time.

Half a minute of his barrage ended with a howl that sounded like the wolf was in pain.

“DO NOT BE A COWARD! FACE ME!”

Max laughed and shrugged, summoning a book from storage as well as a cookie.

“Big words from the one who picked a place he thought would guarantee him a win. Why not choose a place made of stone or sand?”

Snarling, Kazrak swung both axes once more at the opening, absorbing the recoil and then turning, walking off out of view.

I don’t think he’s happy.

When you say things as obvious as that, I’m certain hanging out with your dwarven friend has made you stupid. He’s enraged, and we both know this. Now then, will we take bets on how long he will last before he breaks?

No… I don’t like to bet on a life like that. Still, I’m certain he’ll fight until the very end.

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Hours passed, and the crowd's noise began to get louder as the space where Kazrak stood continued shrinking. Already, the wolf was bent over slightly, the top of the arena pressing down on his head, and from what Max had tested with an arrow, there was only twenty yards or less of space around where they were.

Howls continued coming, and Kazrak strained against an object he knew wouldn’t move.

“FREE ME, OR I WILL RAVAGE YOUR FAMILIES! END THIS FIGHT I ORDER YOU!”

His constant threats and calls for a way out made the crowd go wild, and the truth of what this place represents was evident to all.

A place of death if a single mistake or miscalculation was made.

“Igarra wanted the same thing, but she couldn’t even force those outside to stop what happened in here,” Max said as he stood near the entrance. “You’re going to die. How it happens… well that’s the question.”

“I won’t surrender!”

“Oh I wasn’t asking you to do such a thing,” he replied. “It’s more of will my spells and abilities kill you or will the collapsing of the arena do the job?”

“You couldn’t kill me earlier. How can you hope…” he paused, the ticking of some timer they both knew had taken place, causing him to be pressed down a foot. “Hope to end me?”

“When you can’t move, how will you defend yourself? Besides… I have lots of ways to make this work in my favor.”

A snarl came from his opponent, but his expression didn’t convey the sound. Both of his eyes were darting around, seeing the space around him vanish.

“You’re starting to wonder what it will be like… dying. Trust me… it’s not fun,” Max proclaimed as he rubbed his chin and gazed at the bent-over wolfkin. “I lost count of how many times I died against Igarra. Seems foolish if you ask me to come here and think you could claim my world as your own.”

Slowly, he gazed across the open area, knowing countless beings were watching this fight come to an end.

“I’d like to think out there that others won't be foolish and believe they can win. They can’t. All they do is come here to die if they challenge me or the one I set up in my place.”

A low groan came from Kazrak as the arena shrunk again, now on his hands and knees, his back pressed against the top part of the barrier.

It’s time. Take it.

A smile he had practiced the last time he spent months here formed, and Max stepped out from his domain, watching the wolf turn his head to look at him.

With his weapon in hand, Max poked upwards and almost laughed to realize the top of the space was only inches from the roof of his head.

“I’ll make this quick,” Max said as he waited on Bob.

[Cooldowns Reset]

Next to him a large glowing ball of lightning grew at the tip of his weapon and his skill and companion poured endless amounts of mana into it.

“You… can’t defeat me!” Kazrak proclaimed, trying to move but unable to. “I am a child of Liulfr!”

“And he’s going to be very disappointed in you tarnishing his name,” Max replied as he set his feet.

You need to hurry. The next shift is coming soon.

Let’s end this. I have one last thing to say.

“This is my final warning to any foolish enough to challenge me for this world!” Max shouted as he moved forward, set his feet and swung as he activated every skill he had.

One second he was just a few yards from the wolfkin.

The next, he had a hand on his bulging, metallic arm.

[Festering Touch]

[Weakness]

A single step took him away as a spasm worked its way through his opponent.

Unlike the first time he went all out, Max didn’t use a hammer.

His newest weapon was the blade spear it had originally been crafted as.

Lightning arced off the tip as he drove it toward Kazrak’s head.

[Berserker]

[Power Strike]

[Rampage]

[Magical Strike]

[Ghost Strike]

[Quick Attack]

[Wind Wall]

[Earth Wall]

[Ice Wall]

[Spell Burst]

Three pillars shot upward, forcing his opponent's head up, unable to move it from the place where Max had trapped it.

A pair of silver eyes, no longer red, watched as the bladed tip, now a white color from the spell imbued in it, plunged through the left eyeball and through the socket.

No howl came.

Silence was the only sound for a moment as the blade struck true, connecting to the back of Kazrak's skull. Max twisted the shaft, receiving a jolt of energy and a cold snap that told him the wolfkin was no longer there.

12(1) Chapter 421 - That Wonderful Feeling 1)

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2203986/chapter-421-that-wonderful-feeling;**COPY_OK[2025-04-15 15:13],[Fav2025-04-15 15:13],[word2025-04-15 15:15],[publish2025-04-15 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-15 15:02]**

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 421 - That Wonderful Feeling

[Bonus Stats Consumed]

[100 Strength Consumed]

[100 Constitution Consumed]

[100 Dexterity Consumed]

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill does not match Racial Type]

[Consume is unable to convert Skill]

[Power stored for future use]

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill does not match Racial Type]

[Consume is unable to convert Skill]

[Power stored for future use]

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill does not match Racial Type]

[Consume is unable to convert Skill]

[Power stored for future use]

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill does not match Racial Type]

[Consume is unable to convert Skill]

[Power stored for future use]

[Consume has Consumed multiple Racial Skills]

[Consume is attempting to convert Skills]

[Consume is unable to convert Skill]

[Consume is unable to convert Skill]

[Consume is unable to convert Skill]

[Consume has partially successfully converted a Skill]

[Consume is attempting to convert fully]

[…]

[…]

[Consume has modified skill for growth and potential unlocking]

[Consume has gained 20% of Racial Skill - Bloodline]

[Racial Skill - Bloodline has achieved 40%]

[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]

[Dual Wield - Legendary has been upgraded to Dual Wield - Legendary+]

[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]

[Axe Mastery - Legendary has been upgraded to Axe Mastery - Legendary+]

[Melee Weapon Mastery - Legendary has been upgraded to Melee Weapon Mastery - Legendary+]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Skill type is too similar to current skill]

[Consume is attempting to convert skill]

[Harden Body can be replaced]

[Replace Harden Body?]

[Y / N]

[Skill Consumed is Equal to Rank of Current Skill]

[Power stored for future use]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Skill Consumed is Equal to Rank of Current Skill]

[Power stored for future use]

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill does not match Racial Type]

[Consume is unable to convert Skill]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Skill type is too similar to current skill]

[Consume is attempting to convert skill]

[Berserker can be replaced]

[Replace Berserker?]

[Y / N]

[World Champion Defeated]

[New Title Unlocks Soon]

His body shuddered from the power that filled him, and as he stood there, his spear lodged within Kazrak's orbital socket, Max took a few deep breaths and collected himself.

Focus on making a statement. We can deal with those notifications later.

Clearing his throat, Max yanked his weapon free and stored it.

After doing so, Bob dismissed all of the walls he had summoned, and his opponent's corpse fell to the ground.

Cheers rang out, and shouts of his name echoed as the arena began to return to its normal size. Gone was the protective barrier and for the first time in forever, he felt the cacophony of the praise being given to him.

Like giant waves in an ocean, the noise from everyone gathered slammed into him repeatedly, and he spun around, seeing thousands of different beings on their feet, or hooves, waving appendages and making noise.

His door to the dimensional space was still open, and Max frowned at the body next to his feet.

Do I need to cut this up or…

Give me a moment.

He could feel Bob doing something and slowly the doorway began to expand, finally stopping when it was almost twenty feet tall and wide.

I guess that works… I just need to focus to make it like that.

A chuckle came from their bond, and Max grabbed the silver hair of his fallen opponent and dragged the body to the opening, tossing it easily inside. Once it was within, he willed the door to close and turned his attention back to the crowd.

Holding up both hands, he waited, and a bell sounded, cutting everyone off.

“This is my world. To anyone out there watching, world champion, god, or whoever. Make a move against this world, and you make a move against me.”

He glared as he slowly turned, feeling the area around his eyes tighten as he scowled.

“You do not want to make an enemy of me. If for a moment you think you can outsmart me or overpower me, know this. I’ve yet to show you what I’m truly capable of.”

Lowering his hands, the crowd roared again. After taking a moment to bask in it all, Max snapped his fingers and pointed at his feet. A second later, a shimmering portal appeared beneath him.

Blinking he sensed the two in the room, one bouncing up and down the other appearing to be hugging himself and shaking.

“You did it!” Jazzjak exclaimed. “I knew you would but still!”

“Bah, I’m the only one who bet on you,” Quilazmore proclaimed as he moved forward. “Still, I am glad you used Kazrak’s plan against him.”

Max smiled and held out his hand, shaking each of theirs as he turned and looked at the screen behind him.

Lines were everywhere, with different numbers and reports scrolling along it.

“This room… is different.”

“Oh yes! It’s the main control room,” the dark elf said as he moved to a long metal bench-like area with hundreds of buttons and other things embedded in it. “From here, the arena is controlled and programmed. I can also see how we did with the betting, what kind of gifts have been given, and by whom!”

“Gifts?”

Jazzjak hopped to where a green and blueish chest was and tapped it.

“Inside here, gifts will appear from those who are either present or took the time to visit one of the locations where such things can be gifted. The AR-42069 network spans tens of thousands of worlds and showcases fights from all of them. Some are very basic and in my opinion, not worth watching at all, but occasionally someone might be bored when nothing else is available. Others, like today, are considered one of the top three tiers, drawing viewers from all over.”

His head swam a little from what he was learning, and the concept that tens of thousands of worlds were all part of some display like this bothered him deeply.

“So this fight… was the highest?”

Both the rabbit and dark elf chuckled as they looked at each other.

“Uh… no,” replied Quilazmore. “Your fight was the second highest. Alpha is rare, with most fights like the one you had between Igarra and yourself being a Bravo.”

“A bravo? Why would that one have been less than today?”

“You were nobody,” Jazzjak quickly replied as he opened up the box and reached inside, pulling out a purple potion that swirled like a vortex. “Oh, this is a great gift indeed! We’ll need to send a thank you to Hkruaguma for this!”

Max watched as Quilazmore’s eyebrows rose at least an inch. The elf smiled, and his sharp teeth were all displayed.

“That is a great gift! I’ll make a note of it!”

Turning, he began poking buttons quickly and after a few seconds, returned his attention to Max, rolling his eyes after doing so.

“You look lost… we tried to tell you there was much to teach you, but you never had time.”

“I… guess you’re right,” he replied. “Still… should I ask what that potion does and what kind of fight is required for the highest tier.”

Jazzjak’s nose twitched rapidly and the vorpal bunny walked over to Max and held out the potion.

“Inspect it and you’ll see!”

[Inspect Potion]

*****

Elixir of Limit Break

+20% to all stats for 4 hours. -20% to all stats for 4 hours after the bonus wears off.

2% Chance to become addicted

*****

“Wow… that’s good and bad,” Max stated as he inspected the potion. “Just how rare are these?”

“Very, for lots of reasons,” the rabbit stated. “One, they are hard to come by, and two, they can be addictive. Rumors swirl of those who almost can’t seem to handle not having one. For those who are… life gets messy fast.”

“But they are helpful in a pinch,” Quilazmore said. “If you fight an opponent in the arena that might be a tough one, you can see how a bonus like that can make the difference between life or death.”

Do you think Kazrak used one of these?

I have no way of guessing but part of me doubts it. Based on his behavior, he was pretty cocky and very protective of his heritage. Then again, when one's life comes down to it… If he had taken one, it would have worn off long before we killed him.

Storing the elixir, Max pointed at the screen with all the numbers that continued to change.

“We’ll talk about this later. For now, I need to go and see my friends. Thank you again for helping me as much as you could.”

Both of them chuckled, and Jazzjak moved to where the dark elf was and pushed him aside.

“I’ve got this. You need to take him to where he wants to go.”

Grinning, Quilazmore moved to a wall in the room and drew a door frame along the stone with his finger.

Gold light appeared, and then the section of stone he marked vanished, revealing a portal.

“I can get you close to it. Do I need to show you the way?”

Shaking his head, Max clapped the elf on the shoulder and stopped just before going through.

“I’ll be fine. Thank you again, and each of you tell your wives I’ll be looking forward to meeting them and having dinner.”

He could sense them both smile as he took the last two steps that sent him through the portal.

Something tells me that's going to be a dinner to remember.

***

Tanila's embrace felt amazing, and Rakonath was right there with her, nuzzling the pair with his neck.

"I was scared," she whispered. "It had been so long and… for a moment…"

"You don't have to say anything," he replied, hugging her just a little tighter. "I would have returned to inform you of the time, but I didn't want to risk giving away your position just in case."

I took care of her while you were gone. Her nails are really good at scratching my scales.

Unable to help it, Max started to laugh, and Tanila pulled back and shot him with a quizzical look.

"Rakonath said that you give excellent scratches."

She laughed, and soon, a low thrum came from the silver dragon.

"Does this mean the rest of us can finally get our hugs too?" Fowl asked, winking at him.

"For my shorter brother, anytime!"

Being freed from his current embrace, Max moved to where his dwarven friend was and scooped him up and spun him around.

"Gods, I'm going to puke!"

Laughter and thrumming filled the room as he continued to spin his friend around a little longer before setting him down.

"You all about ready to get out of here?" Max asked as he motioned to the door. "I've got something to show each of you, and we're going to need to talk about some things. Big things."

He could see their reactions.

Relief on some, curiosity on others.

Even Aerthen appeared to look intrigued as her face scrunched up a bit after his statement.

"First, though, I'm going to need to feed Rakonath if he is able to eat some of my enemy."

Immediately, his dragon began to shake from side to side, his large body threatening to knock someone over if they were next to him.

Moving to the far edge of the room, Max focused on the dimensional storage spell and made it active, increasing the door size until it was as big as Bob had made it.

Gasps came as they saw inside the body of Kazrak.

“He’s huge!” Cordellia exclaimed.

“Everyone’s taller than me,” Fowl bemoaned as Max moved inside and grabbed a leg, dragging the wolfkin out of the storage.

With it lying on the floor, the room was overly cramped, and Max motioned to the silver body.

“Think you can eat it?”

Aerthen raised a hand. “Wait!”

Her words caused the silver dragon, who was about to snake its way past everyone to the free meal, to hesitate

“What’s wrong?” Rakonath asked, his silver eyes following her as she moved near the corpse.

“Smell it first. Can you not sense it?”

Both nostrils flared and then retracted, the younger dragon’s head pulling back.

“It… smells… wrong?”

Her humanoid form’s nose was scrunching as the large woman moved to where the silver corpse lay, and she bent down, lifting up a hand and bringing it to her face.

With her tongue, she tasted the finger and then immediately spat, throwing the hand down.

“Put it away, please!”

Max quickly returned it to the storage space without hesitating and shut the door, waiting to hear what was wrong with it.

“He is… cursed. A weird aura is on him and whatever items are stored within him. If myself or Rakonath consumed such a thing, we would grow stronger, but we would also lose part of ourselves.”

“Lose in what way?” he asked, trying to get a read on her expression.

A drink appeared in her hand, and the red dragon began to gulp it down.

“Corruption,” Tanila said quietly. “He’s been corrupted.”

“Exactly,” Aerthen added after finishing her drink. “I’m not sure how it works, but somehow, this one has been corrupted. His very being is filled with dark, dangerous energy, and you need to find a way to get rid of the corpse. If it was left to decompose on its own, it might ruin a large area of the land it was left on or worse.”

“Worse?” Max asked, now curious about what might be worse than ruining large amounts of land.

“It could possibly turn into an undead being,” Tanila said, getting a nod of agreement from Rakonath’s mentor.

Everyone in the party except Tanila took a step back, each sensing the danger of what had been told.

Links

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[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/96526/apocalypse-healer-path-of-death-progression-litrpgstubbing

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13(1) Chapter 422 - Rakonath's Secret 1)

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2206635/chapter-422-rakonaths-secret;**COPY_OK[2025-04-16 15:23],[Fav2025-04-16 15:22],[word2025-04-16 15:23],[publish2025-04-16 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-16 15:02]**

Chapter 422 - Rakonath's Secret

“He’s got a bloody throne room,” Fowl said as they moved down a hallway to the quarters Max wanted to spend time in. “A throne room!”

“You’re just jealous,” Cordellia teased as she poked the dwarf from behind.

“You bet your ogre nuts I am! Imagine having a world look up to you as their champion and having a throne and everything else that goes with it!”

Max groaned as his friend continued to lament a little bit about the things the dwarf considered special.

“He doesn’t understand,” Tanila whispered as she walked beside him, watching Everett talk with Quilazmore as the dark elf guided the party to where they would be for a while.

Aerthen and Rakonath were both trailing behind everyone, bringing up the rear.

Max could sense that they were speaking somehow, almost telepathically to the other.

Is it weird that I can almost hear him when he talks like that to her?

Any weirder than you and I being able to converse and him knowing we are?

No… I guess not. Still we need to figure out what to do about those skill options. You don't mind that I'm going to ask about the Legendary+ rank do you?

A chuckle came through their bond as Bob seemed overly amused by that question.

When has it mattered if I mind? I already told you I'm not sure exactly how that works but I can sense a difference in your skills. You could tell that weapon and dual wield skills were higher than yours when we fought, even to the point we couldn't stand toe to toe long term. Which means there is enough of a difference between those and the others.

But does that mean that you might rank up to Legendary+ first before ever reaching Godly?

Gone was the laughter and amusement, now a sense of uncertainty that felt almost overwhelming.

Another question I have no answer for and yet it scares me. I can sense the amount of power I have gained from both of the two we recently defeated. Compared to Igarra it was a little less and yet when one looks at how much more I need… the pool of what I need seems so deep.

I guess what bothers me even more is that if there is a rank after Legendary like that, how many more could there be? What if there are two or three? How much power will I truly need to finally evolve to what I feel I must?

A gentle elbow in his side brought Max out of his discussion and he saw the look Tanila was giving him.

"Just talking with a friend."

"Oh, I knew what you were doing. It's more of what you were discussing and waiting to hear about the results. You seem a bit more… overwhelmed? Confused? I'm not sure what the right word is."

He nodded and kissed her hand after bringing it to his lips.

"Yes to all those. Once we are settled, we have a lot of things to discuss and it may take days or weeks to figure out everything if that is even possible."

"Weeks?" she asked. "What could be that… big?"

"Besides two dragons, a beautiful elven princess, a strange new world and everyone wanting to fight each other?" Max joked. "Oh, just wait and see."

***

"I'm sorry about almost poisoning you," Max said, scratching the scales along his dragon's neck.

“You can’t blame yourself and I was foolish for thinking with my stomach first instead of my brain. Aerthen spent the time as we walked here to ensure that I understood the danger such a thing could have caused. Had it been bad enough she said I might have corrupted you through our bond.”

“Really?”

Moving his large head up and down, Rakonath snorted.

“I feel… frustrated that we have been bonded for so long and still have yet gotten time to learn more about each other and the bond. Do not think of me as some pouty child or eggling who needs attention. I can sense the bond between you and your mate–”

“Tanila,” Max said quickly.

“Yes… Tanila. She is very protective of you and yet seems not to keep me away. Still with your child growing inside her, I know there is a bond I’ll never match.”

Frowning, he shook his head and leaned against the silver dragon.

“Don’t say that. I’m not sure how this bond works and no one else does either. It has grown stronger and you know it. When Aerthen was hurt and you were worried, I could sense it. For that to happen, we must grow closer. Who knows what it will be like in the next ten or twenty years.”

Thrumming, Rakonath shifted and wrapped his neck around Max.

“Twenty years… you speak like that is some long time. What about in a hundred or two?”

“Uh… you know most humans barely live to be one hundred or maybe two hundred if they are exceptionally strong and have progressed high into the tower?”

His thrumming grew loud enough that Max could feel the sound waves almost passing through him.

“She didn’t tell you!” Rakonath exclaimed. “I know something you don’t!”

His outburst had gotten the attention of everyone sitting around the table on the other side of the large 100x50 foot room Max had set up for them to stay in.

“What is it I don’t know?”

Moving his head to where his jaw was against the floor, the laughing dragon gazed into Max’s eyes with his silver ones.

Because of our bond, you will easily live hundreds of years! Aerthen says that anyone who bonds with a dragon has a prolonged life. Some other races, she says, have lived thousands of years, and their dragons live the same amount of time.

“How? How can you know this?” Max asked, feeling the shock of what he was hearing.

Our Father gave her dreams after you saved us. She told me just a week ago and informed me that she would tell you when the time was right.

A chain to a weight that had dragged his heart down for so long suddenly snapped, causing his whole outlook on the future to suddenly brighten.

“What are you two laughing and smiling about?” Tanila asked as she drew closer to them.

Slowly Rakonath moved his head slightly, allowing room for her to come to where Max was standing.

Tell her. I can sense how much you wish for her to know.

He felt his eyes trembling and saw Tanila’s expression change. Her eyes looked worried as they scrunched together, and there was a slight frown.

“Nothing bad,” Max whispered as he grabbed her hand and drew her close. Wrapping both arms around her, he gazed into her eyes and smiled, sniffing back the wetness he didn’t care had formed. “My… Rakonath has informed me of something that has changed everything.”

“And what is that?” she asked, leaning back slightly so she could look at both him and the silver dragon at the same time.

“Why don’t you tell her.”

A single thrum came and then Rakonath moved his head close enough that his breath caused her braid to move.

“Max will easily live two or three hundred years because of his bond with me.”

He caught her as her knees gave out, a gasp escaping her mouth as he held her tight and helped her back to her feet.

Matching tears started to run down her cheeks as she looked at him and saw him nod in agreement.

“When? Who says? I mean…”

“Every question I asked as well,” Max stated. “Apparently, Aerthen learned this from the one who approved the bond. I just found out and… as you can see I am just as excited about this as you are.”

With a happy shriek, Tanila squeezed Max tight, and he returned the embrace.

After a moment, she freed herself, and he let go, sensing the direction she needed to take.

“Rakonath… thank you. For so much, but especially this. Know that I will always be grateful for what you have given him… me… us,” she said as one hand touched her midsection which had started to show slightly and the other touched his snout. “Never feel like you are not part of us. Forgive me if I have been… not as close as I could have been.”

The slightest thrum came for a few seconds and then Rakonath pressed a little more against her hand.

“Know that you, your child and your man are under my wing. I shall protect all of you the same.”

For the next few minutes, they spent time together, just enjoying the joy of a simple thing like the potential to live a few hundred years.

“Can I ask a question though?”

Both Tanila and Max looked up at the dragon who had his head cocked sideways.

“Go for it,” he said.

“If I remember correctly, isn’t age not a problem though if you defeat the tower? I mean—”

Tanila string of curse words was in the elven language, and Max could sense a sensation of warmth coming from her.

“We’re fools!” she muttered. “This whole time I was so anxious and upset because of thinking you were going to grow old and die on me… and then I get excited when Rakonath tells me you’ll live for hundreds of years… only for him to then remind me that age won’t be a problem after we defeat the tower.”

Chuckling, Max nodded and shrugged.

“I… did forget that as well… who knew all these intelligence points were wasted on both of us.”

A low thrum came from the silver dragon as he lay near the pair.

“Aerthen had mentioned this might happen. Still, I find it humorous that neither of you pointed it out yet.”

“That’s what I get for being focused on the wrong things,” Max replied. “Still, I can’t help but laugh either way. Just knowing we’ll get to grow old and tired of each other is a blessing.”

Both dragon and man laughed as Tanila groaned, giving each of them a hand gesture.

***

Quilazmore seemed to be enjoying where he sat between their Faction leader and archer, chatting up both of them as everyone waited for Max to finish his time with Rakonath.

As they approached, Max saw the dark elf was animated. His hands went everywhere as he talked, glancing back and forth between the pair every other second.

Jazzjak looked like an infant, his legs hanging off the chair as he sat next to Aerthen, who always kept her own chair with her.

No one seemed to care that Fowl and Batrire were feeding each other fruit similar to the grapes from their world. Both of them lost in the other's eyes as they gorged on the small feast placed before them.

Clearing his throat, Max got their attention as he moved to where they were and pulled out Tanila's chair.

After sitting in his, he saw the looks each of them gave him.

"Care to share what's so good to make you smile like that?" Fowl asked.

"Just happy to be alive and with all you."

"Bah, that's a load of dragon… er ogre shite," their warrior replied, seeing the glare Aerthen had just given him.

A few chuckles came but he ignored them, glad to see everyone enjoying this moment of peace.

"I know it's been a crazy day or two for us and even more for Jazzjak and Quilazmore. I want to get into a few things because we're only here maybe a month before we need to return home and start getting things that I've been unable to deal with resolved.

"I'm glad to see that each of you has been talking with the others because that's exactly why I have brought each of you to this place."

A few pieces of paper appeared in his hand, and Max entertained them all as Bob used Wind Magic to deliver them to everyone around the table.

"Show off," their ranger muttered as she plucked hers from the air.

"Take a look at what I've listed, and if you have any questions, save them for later. Instead, I need to ask Everett, Aerthen, Jazzjak, and Quilazmore something that could potentially impact all of us down the road."

Faces changed as they stopped reading the page before them and focused on him.

"I've known you for a while now, Max and you never seem to stop surprising me. So is this going to be one of those moments?"

Nodding at their Faction leader, he took a deep breath and rubbed his bald head for a moment.

"We all know the ranks for skills as we progress as adventures. Common, Uncommon, Rare, Epic, Legendary and Godly."

Grunts of affirmation came from everyone, and their gazes felt even more intense than they had been a few seconds before.

"So what I want to know is if anyone here has ever met someone with a Godly rank?"

"I swear to all that is holy, if you tell me you have a Godly ranked skill I'm going to kill you," Fowl muttered.

Shaking his head, Max watched as his dwarven friend sighed.

“I do not have any, “Aerthen said as she leaned forward. “I know of none that have had one.”

“Bah, I only have one,” Jazzjak said as he glanced at the dark elf. “I’m certain I don’t know of any who had one.”

“Not even Igarra?” Max asked.

Quilazmore shook his head.

“She had lots of legendary skills. That was one of the things she boasted about. If she had a godly one, I have no doubt she would have talked about it.”

“Max… why are you asking this?”

“Crafters on our world say they have Godly skills,” he replied. “Even here, one of the crafters I know says her mother has godly crafting skills. But what if they really don’t?”

Everyone went silent.

He could see the looks of confusion on some of their faces.

Then he sensed Tanila’s hand coming to where his forearm was.

“What is it you know that we don’t?”

Patting her hand, Max smiled.

“I think there are ranks between Legendary and Godly.”

“ *Think* ?” Everett asked. “Or know?”

His smile gave everything away as their dwarf let out a groan before passing out and falling out of his chair.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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14(1) Chapter 423 – What Rank Comes Next 1)

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2209293/chapter-423-what-rank-comes-next;**COPY_OK_FIRST[2025-04-22 13:35],[Fav2025-04-22 13:35],[word2025-04-22 13:46],[publish2025-04-17 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-17 15:02]**

Chapter 423 - What Rank Comes Next

“What you are saying is that you are far stronger than Igarra ever was,” Quilazmore stated. “To have a skill above Legendary is… very prestigious.”

Max glanced at the others who were all nodding slightly in agreement.

“I’m not planning on going out and promoting that I have one,” he replied. “Only a fool would do that.”

“Not necessarily,” Everett said, stopping the stroking motion he had been doing on his chin. “Your friend is right. For others to know this could strike fear or doubt in their ability to overcome you. There will always be a list of those who believe they might win while someone else lost. Knowing your potential power may cause some to dismiss their desire to fight.”

“Don’t doubt for a moment that a crafter wouldn’t tell everyone about their skill rank,” Fowl added. “Any dwarf with a Godly tier rank would be singing it from the ale houses.”

“But Ruznula was a better crafter than I am. Everyone knew about her skill and yet…” he paused, considering what had happened when he and the head weapon crafter for the king spoke. “She never admitted to having a Godly rank, simply smiling when I said something.

“Even Buwingrid never came right out and said her mother had that rank.”

Jazzjak snorted and shook his head.

“There have been rumors swirling around about that old dwarf for so long. Since you’ve been gone, Quilazmore has been trying to get me to confirm different crafters within this part of the city and their ranks for commissioning work. Igarra didn’t spend much time with many of them as she didn’t need the items they made.”

As the vorpal rabbit spoke, a tablet appeared in his hand and he started poking it.

“None of the crafters I have listed confirmed a rank above Legendary. As you said, many smiled or made jokes about what theirs actually was, but none confirmed it.”

Tanila’s fingers were drumming across the table slightly as she sat next to him, keeping the same cadence as the three fingers tapped over and over.

“Do you have something to add my love?”

Frowning she shook her head.

“Nothing specific other than confirming what everyone is saying. My father never publicly denied it when some said he must have one, but he also never came right out and claimed it. He occasionally spoke about the power that came from being above a legendary skill and the goal that we needed to have to acquire one. Yet in all my time… I can’t recall ever hearing about an elf with one outside a story or tale of some kind.”

“Everett, does the Faction have a record you can recall of someone upgrading their skill that high?”

Chuckling, he shook his head.

“No… the power drain to get one to legendary is costly and none have ever been able to gain enough power that I am aware of even to attempt it. Even… Baldin never considered getting that rank as he knew what it cost our Faction to give him the Legendary one. Imagine being responsible for fifty or potentially one hundred or more adventurers missing out on a Legendary skill upgrade simply to try and push yours to that limit.”

A low whistle came from their ranger.

Grunting, Max could easily absorb the knowledge and information others were sharing, yet he didn’t like how it appeared something else was hidden from everyone.

Could this be another tower thing? Like the last floor? Something some might know but don’t or can’t talk about?”

I doubt it's as much a *can’t* as a don’t. You’re easily talking about it, and I think the progression is possibly the most important thing. Imagine if you’re a god or someone else in charge of educating people on different ranks. Think about how that first sharing of knowledge to a world one creates and the people or species born in the god's image.

How do you tell them this is how powerful you can get? Do you simply say, ‘ *Well, after Legendary is Legendary+ and then Legendary++, followed by ten more?*’ Or do you say Godly, knowing none of them will ever achieve it? One path would confuse and dissuade them from even trying. The other would give them a goal to achieve, even if they all know it seems impossible.

The truth of what Bob said made sense on so many levels, and yet Max’s biggest hang-up was what came next.

“Is this something we need to lose sleep over?” Batrire asked. “I mean, you’re telling us you achieved something none of us would have imagined. Shouldn’t we be celebrating that?”

Fowl and Cordellia both pounded the table softly, and he knew that their healer was right.

“You’re always keeping me grounded,” Max replied. “I’m just wondering more about the long-term end of things. With each of you having acquired the skill ranks you did, what comes next? How do we get Fowl’s shield skill to the next level and what would that actually do for him?”

A grunt from their dwarf, followed by a frow,n told him what he had done.

“Sorry… I forgot that not everyone knows that.”

“I know… you’re excited, and this is big news. Stil,l I’d prefer not to share everything about me that makes me special.”

“Like your wonderful personality?”

Fowl gave Cordellia the middle finger as he smiled at her.

“If I can interrupt,” Aethern said as she stood. “I think both of you are right but if I’m honest, we need to start working on the list of things Max gave us. Rakonath and I need to get out and he needs to fly some. Meanwhile, I’m very interested in seeing this teleporter stationed up in the sky.”

“Please hold off on that for a moment,” Jazzjak asked. “Until he notifies everyone that you are part of his group and that you aren’t here as a challenger or as someone standing in his place, we’d prefer to keep any possible chaos to a minimum.”

“Is it that bad?”

The vorpal rabbit nodded.

“Before he came and defeated Igarra, only one dragon reigned here. There is still a lot of animosity towards those from that kind simply because of how she could be. Here on this world, strength comes from killing and she was a monster when it came to that.”

Is that such a bad thing?

Max turned his head and saw Rakonath’s silver eyes focused on him.

“Do you want to ask that question out loud or you asking that just for me?”

Everyone turned to see what Max was talking about and a huff came from the younger dragon.

“I had not meant to say it out loud but I can. In a world like this is killing a bad thing? From what I’ve learned, there are or were rules here which limited how people kill. Chaos and disorder were kept to a minimum. You had mentioned the different rings of the city and how people in the farthest rings were often forced into slavery and yet none of that has stopped or changed since you took over. Meanwhile, all of the arenas are still active and fights are taking place.

“Somewhere out in the sand areas and beyond, I’m certain there are beings who are living and fighting as the world turns. Unlike your world, which has a different set of rules for getting stronger, if this world requires such a thing, how can you hope to change them?”

Chuckles from around the table caused the dragon to frown and Max stood, moving the few yards between them. With his hand he gently began to scratch the scales along Rakonath's snout.

"That is a question i can't answer or have simple solutions to. I've posed them to Everett before and that is one of the reasons why he is here. Jazzjak and Quilazmore both understand my concern but know their world better and explain how actions I might take will or won't work. For now all I can do is try to protect the people here from being under someone that would abuse or misuse them."

"But it also has to do with gaining power and items?"

His face reacted to the question that came from a creature that was less than a year old but somehow had wisdom and knowledge that surpassed many who had lived a lifetime.

He asks questions like that and I know that at no point is Rakonath trying to trap me, seem judgemental or has ulterior motives. He's not naive… but innocent?

Your… dragon is trying to learn about two worlds and the human he is bonded to. He can see the kindness in your heart and has never watched you do what you must in order to protect those you love. Everything he has learned is from words or a dream. Can you blame him for wondering how you might have ulterior motives for staying in power here?

But we both agreed that I needed to remove Kazrak…

Sometimes yes, sometimes no, but we're not here to have this conversation. For now, answer him as best you can and then make sure that Quilazmore shows him the replay of your fight. Rakonath needs to learn what it is you can really do and see how you use not just your might but also your mind.

"Tell you what… when we're done here I'm going to make sure you get a chance to watch how my fight took place. Perhaps that would help you understand me a little better."

"Is this your idea or… the other ones?"

Laughing, Max scratched harder on the scales, getting a trill in return.

"Let's not tell all of them," he whispered and motioned to the table with his head. "Not everyone knows about him."

Ahh so like your dwarf friend having a Legendary Shield skill and you telling all of them?

Laughter echoed deep inside his mind and he knew Bob was enjoying this moment.

"Yes… exactly like that."

A small thrum came from his dragon, who nudged him with his snout before laying it on the ground.

Well, then, I apologize.

Giving the large head a playful swipe, Max moved back to the table and pointed at the door.

“Alright, let’s get to work. Aerthen is right. We have a lot of things to do, and I want to make sure as much as possible is done before we head back.”

***

Watching a replay of the message he had just done, Max shook his head, still struggling to understand the technology as it was called here and what it could do.

“So… that replay,” Fowl asked, “is going out to how many different worlds?”

“Just ours,” Jazzjak stated as he tapped a few buttons on what was known as a large keyboard. “The one of the fight you all watched went out to over five thousand worlds.”

Tanila’s hand squeezed his arm tighter at that number, and Max could see her pulling some of her lip inward.

“How… how many worlds are there?” Cordellia asked.

Scratching a spot between his ears, the vorpal bunny glanced up at the overhead ceiling and hummed for a few seconds.

“I’m not sure any of us knows, but I know of over ten thousand. Rumors swirl and abound about how many there really are, but those numbers hurt my tiny brain.”

“Ten thousand,” their ranger muttered. “And… are they all as strong as this one?”

Shaking his head, Jazzjak pointed at her and then at Fowl.

“Which of you is stronger?”

The pair glanced at one another, smirking for a moment.

“As in who would win in a fight?” Fowl asked.

Nodding, the rabbit grinned as both sized the other up.

“Well, I could shoot him all day long and kite him, never letting him catch me but I’m not certain I’d do any real damage. Even worse would be the fact that each time I hit him… it wouldn’t be good for me.”

Fowl grunted and frowned.

“And I’d never catch her… I guess it would be whoever starved first or perhaps fell asleep and was killed during that time?”

“So what you’re telling me is that neither of you is stronger and yet each of you are powerful in your own way.”

Cordellia chuckled as their warrior shrugged.

“There are worlds like that out there. Similar and different. Some like yours allow you to get stronger by killing specific creatures inside a dungeon. We don’t have that here. Even though our tower is based on killing things, the truth is you must be powerful even to attempt it. Many have entered since Max left, and we opened it. Most have returned but a few did not. It would appear that those who have been successful are already strong, and the smarter ones have grouped up, working to help each other get stronger. Typically, though, it is only in groups of two or three.”

“And the other worlds?”

“Are even more different,” Jazzjak stated. “Some could come here and crush most of us. Others would be far weaker than any of us. Many worlds are mixtures of different species, while some are only one. Some worlds are locked in constant battles with others and need ones like ours to outfit or resupply their fighters.

“Your world, for whatever reason, is not part of this collective, though I could venture a guess why.”

“And that would be?” Fowl asked.

“Your gods don’t allow it. Anything else I’d venture to guess is just that, a guess. All I can tell you is what I’ve learned since Max changed everything here in the past months. Like you must be feeling right now, there was a time when my brain felt like it hurt from so many things I thought were one way, but it turned out to be different.”

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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15(1) Chapter 424 - Different Systems, Different Rules 1)

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2211906/chapter-424-different-systems-different-rules;**COPY_OK_FIRST[2025-04-22 13:36],[Fav2025-04-22 13:36],[word2025-04-22 13:54],[publish2025-04-18 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-18 15:02]**

Chapter 424 - Different Systems, Different Rules

Max sat across from Jazzjak and Quilazmore as the pair looked at different tablets, each writing something down on the paper he had given them.

“You’re certain you want me to help handle this?” Everett asked as he glanced through the lists the pair had already given them. “And tell me why I’m not allowed to have one of those.”

Ignoring the request for a tablet like the duo had, Max nodded.

“You’ve been trading materials and supplies far longer than I have, and while you’ve helped me learn through practice, I have other things I must take care of. Getting an understanding of what everything is worth and used for, as well as rarity and trade value, is one of your specialties. That is why you gladly let me raid the Faction vault and all the elemental cores I took and help me secure some from other factions.”

A grin appeared on the older man as he flipped a page and started scanning the next one.

“They were begging me for what you offered. When word got out that I had a dragon scale to trade, they came to me. Even better was how they were happy to keep it a secret.”

“And if they ever found out that you have hundreds more…”

Everett laughed and shrugged.

“I’d have a few upset Faction leaders, but they’d still gladly trade again. No one else has the materials we do, which puts us in a powerful position to control the market and seek out what you’re looking for.”

“Which is exactly why you’re here now,” Max replied. “You have a mind for this, and I need to understand everything in the vault and what has been gifted or is being offered. All the tokens we have earned are worth something, and I’m not sure how to best use them or trade them across all the worlds we now have access to.”

Pulling the purple elixir he had acquired from Jazzjak, Max slid it over to his friend.

“Inspect it.”

A coughing fit came as Everett’s hands trembled momentarily as he held the item that both knew would be worth a fortune on their world.

“20%... that’s… broken.”

Nodding, Max took it from his friend and stored it.

“And if there are more items like this, and we can get our hands on them, how much help could they be as we climb the tower? Even better is the skill shards I hope work for us.”

A hiss came from Quilazmore, and his face looked more pained than usual.

“You need to rethink that idea,” the dark elf stated. “I did some research and what you want to do with your friends might not be… good.”

“Because it won’t work?”

Shaking his head, Quilazmore pushed the tablet aside and, after two seconds, placed two large crystals with etchings on them.

His skill allowed him to read them, and Max immediately wanted to reach out and take both.

“Earth and Water?”

“You said you needed these. Neither are very strong compared to what I’ve seen you display, but they are some of our best. They are only a Rare rank but you said it didn’t matter.”

“Can I?”

The dark elf nodded and slid them across. Max picked up the water one, holding a dark blue crystal, surprised at how heavy it was—not that weight mattered to him.

“Why is this so heavy?”

Jazzjak pointed at the earth one.

“Pick that one up,” the vorpal rabbit told him.

With his left hand, he grabbed the dark brown crystal and could immediately sense the difference between the two. Based on its weight, it was almost as if the earth shard was hollow.

“Wow… it’s like… night and day.”

“How hard is it to carry water in your hands? Dirt is much easier, and for whatever reason, water is the heaviest. Now, back to Quilazmore's words, we asked some questions and did some research with low-level shards.

“Not all those who attempted to absorb them from other worlds had success, and those who did only were of a high level of power. I’m not sure how strong your companions are compared to them.”

“What my fluffy friend here is not coming right out and saying is that not everyone can learn skills from our world without problems. I could take the youngest one in our

world and give them a shard, just as he has done with the crazed pack of wildlings he calls his children.”

Two large teeth appeared as Jazzjak snarled yet the dark elf ignored him.

“I myself have given both of my children a shard as well. Could we give them more than one? Yes but it would cause multiple problems that I doubt we want to discuss the reason why. They are young and need to learn to control one at a time. I could easily absorb those two crystals and gain those powers, but that wouldn’t benefit me because I would be using up the limited number of skill slots I have.”

“You have limits?”

“We each have different limits,” Quilazmore stated as he pointed at Jazzjak. “It’s common knowledge here that different races have different limits and that some races do better with different skills. It is also one of the reasons why you often see some of our strongest warriors being women. For whatever reason, they can often absorb and have better control over some offensive abilities.”

“Don’t get me started on my wife,” the vorpal rabbit muttered.

Clearing his throat, Quilazmore continued.

“Only in this circle will I reveal my limits and how many slots I have left. One of the greatest secrets we keep is how many skills we possess and how many more we can acquire. Not knowing what someone has, or what they can do, provides you a limited amount of protection. Hearing that someone has all their skill slots filled is a warning unless they are foolish to show all their cards… like many thought you did in the arena.”

“But I never revealed all my secrets,” Max replied with a grin.

“Which is why Igarra was very cautious with you. She honestly believed the tower would grind you to nothing, and if you reached the end, you would find yourself weak and vulnerable, which would be an easy meal for the dragon that awaited you.

“I… I have five skills and three more slots. Now, tell me what skills you think I have.”

Frowning, he considered all the things the dark elf did before and realized he had only seen one.

“Just that teleportation thing you do around the property and arena.”

All of his sharp teeth were on display as Quilazmore smiled.

“Ask my partner if he knows any of my other skills.”

Jazzjak let out a low grumble and shook his head, one of his ears flopping to the side as he did.

“Only that one. He is very protective of revealing them. Which is very smart.”

“You have a transformation skill of some kind,” Max stated.

Both pink eyes widened, and Quilazmore laughed.

“You… say that so easily… and I… I showed that when I killed Aimee, didn’t I?”

“At first, I wasn’t sure if that was a racial thing or something else, but I guessed, and it turned out that I was right.”

Pounding the table with his furry hand only caused the dark elf beside him to laugh harder.

“Bah, now I feel stupid for saying yes… still I have four skills and two spots left. For whatever reason, my race is not given more than six, while his allows them eight. Some of the others can have up to ten but most cannot afford them.”

“And Igarra?”

“No one knows,” Quilazmore replied. “Dragons are a tricky thing. Rumors swirl that a dragon might have twenty to fifty skills on some worlds. Some of the oldest ones are rumored to have a hundred. It is why most don’t ever mess with or anger them.”

Nodding, Max turned his attention back to the shards he was holding and crushed the water one.

Dark, blue liquid poured out of the crystal and began to cover his entire hand and arm up to his shoulder. For a moment, it stayed there, shifting slightly as he bent his arm and waggled his fingers.

With a deep blue glow, it all shimmered, and then a cold sensation came as his skin seemed to suck it in.

[Skill Acquired - Water Mastery - Rare]

Frowning he flexed his arm a little and waited.

No combination of skills… what gives?

Well, at least we didn’t get an error this time. Perhaps the system acknowledges that you are not different from others in this world. Ask them.

“Do this world’s system combine skills if you get enough of them?”

Narrowing his eyes, Jazzjak glanced at Max and then at Quilazmore who had turned to look at him.

“As in freeing up slots somehow while keeping all the skills?”

“Yeah,” Max replied. “On our world, if you get four melee weapon skills, it turns into Melee Weapon Mastery. Or if you manage to acquire four elemental skills, it turns into Elemental Magic Mastery. Each gives you access to the four you had before as well as any you didn’t have.”

Coughing, Quilazmore shook his head.

“That would be amazing! If we could do that and free up our slots, I am certain everyone would become a master of everything!”

“Provided they could afford the shards,” Jazzjak stated. “Still I am not certain anyone has ever tried that before.”

Max sensed the hand coming and didn’t dodge it when Everett slapped his arm.

“That’s what you have! I knew it! I didn’t believe it, but I knew it!”

Laughing as the older man’s nose flared out and his eyes narrowed, he couldn’t help but be amused that his skill had been discovered.

“I do have that… though I was certain I had mentioned it at some point.”

Shaking his head, Everett frowned.

“Not to me you didn’t. Still, it makes so much sense now. How you were able to do everything you did. I… considered it a few times but always thought it would be impossible.”

“Is this a big thing on your world?” Jazzjak asked.

“Very much so… for one to get that skill… it is usually the last one they acquire unless the gods were kind upon choosing day, or they were lucky, and a skill shard dropped in the tower. It’s been a while and even Max here hasn’t…”

Everett stopped talking when he saw the change in Max’s expression.

“You… one dropped? When? What!?”

“Recently, I didn’t take it, and that’s not my secret to share,” he replied. “Still it’s the only one we’ve ever seen, and it came from a boss's chest.”

Huffing, the older man leaned back in his chair and crossed both arms.

“Gods… so not fair.”

“So do you want to try and see if they combine?” Quilazmore asked. “I could give you weak skill crystals of the others. I think you said you wanted a metal one as well.”

Crushing the brown crystal, Max watched as brown dirt ran up his arm as it had with the water one, forming a protective barrier before it was absorbed.

He winced, the pain of acquiring this one being at least ten times as unpleasant.

[Skill Acquired - Earth Mastery - Rare]

“Okay, let’s try a metal one.”

Quilazmore stood and a glowing disc appeared near him on the floor.

“I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

***

The crystal in his hand seemed so small compared to the last two. It was barely the size of his thumb and if one wasn’t looking they might have considered it nothing more than a piece of dull, grey metal.

“I guess this means it’s the only one you’re lacking?” Everett asked.

“We’ve seen him use the other three,” Jazzjak stated. “In matches, which is why Kazrak designed the arena the way it was.”

Nodding, Max flipped the crystal over a few times and then crushed it between both hands, surprised to see that it covered only his right one with a metal barrier, almost like a glove.

He fell to his knees, grateful for the nearby table and allowed him to brace himself as the shimmering metal liquid vanished into his hand. Unlike the others, it then seemed to race up his arm and into his chest.

The other three were hovering and he waved them off after a second.

[Skill Acquired - Earth Mastery - Common]

[All Six Elemental Mastery Skills Acquired]

[Combining]

[Error - Elemental Mastery already acquired]

[Skills do not match]

[Consume is attempting to adjust]

[…]

[…]

[Skill Acquisition successfully adjusted]

[Skill Acquired - Elemental Essence Mastery Acquired]

[Determining Rank]

[…]

[…]

[Elemental Essence Mastery - Rare]

Blinking a few times, Max cleared his throat and smiled.

“I’m not certain if this will work for all of you, but… I just caused all six of them to merge into one.”

In one of the rare moments of excitement ever witnessed, Max watched as Jazzjak and Quilazmore embraced each other and started jumping up and down.

“Never a dull moment with you,” Everett muttered. “Still… why would I ever think it would be.”

16(1) Chapter 425 - Tokens to Spend 1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2214678/chapter-425-tokens-to-spend;COPY_OK_FIRST[2025-04-22 13:36],[Fav2025-04-22 13:36],[word2025-04-22 14:05],[publish2025-04-19 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-19 15:02]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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Chapter 425 - Tokens to Spend

After the trio finally came to grips with what Max had just done, Quilazmore was the first one to focus them back on the original task.

“So this line here shows how much has been earned from the arena and those who entered the tower.”

Max held up a hand and stopped the dark elf before he could continue.

“Wait a second. So you’re telling me that there is a currency earned for what people accomplish in the tower?”

“Apparently. This part wasn’t something I was ever privy to, and since no one ever entered the tower, I don’t know how much will continue to be earned. I know that there is a trio that has made it past the fourteenth floor. Whenever they are in the tower it rises faster than when another person or group is in the lower levels.”

Does this mean we are gaining power like Phaius does?

I’m not certain, but it would be a question worth asking him the next time we meet. Of course I wonder how he might react to such a thing.

“What can we do with those tokens?”

Quilazmore moved his finger sideways a few times, changing what was displayed on the tablet, and then stopped, tapping different items listed with costs beside them.

“It appears there are two different stores one can purchase from. One has set prices that seem exceptionally high but also never change. I can’t read what they are or what they stand for, but Igarra did. The other is more of an auction house of sorts. Someone can list an item, and as you see here, it states how long it will last if there is a reserve and current bids.”

“We have those on our world except nowhere near as fancy as yours shows,” Everett stated as he looked over the dark elf’s shoulder. “I can’t read the writing, but I’m assuming what is listed is worth acquiring?”

“That I can’t answer. Igarra did make purchases and sold a few things. Usually, it was something gained either through a trade, as a gift, or when she killed someone.”

“Like their items?” Max asked.

“Or their body.”

Both men winced and tsked at the same time.

“People buy… bodies?”

“Oh they buy everything you can imagine. Animals, creatures, shards, potions, elixirs, weapons, armor, it’s all right here but finding something you want and the price for it is the hard part. Often the things listed here change quickly, and sometimes, it might only last a day.”

Perhaps we could sell Kazrak’s body. Surely someone would want it.

You’re wanting to sell a corrupted body? Aren’t you worried about what it might be used for?

No. It’s simply taking up space in your dimensional storage, and I’m not sure how you would dispose of it. Perhaps you could bury it or burn it or even now surround it in metal, but who to say that doesn’t go wrong?

Why not sell it, acquire more tokens, and use them for something you or the others might need?

Sighing, Max considered Bob’s recommendation for a few seconds.

“Quilazmore, would others be interested in Kazrak’s corpse?”

His head moved up and down rapidly and the dark elf grinned.

“Certainly! There would be some active bidding depending on how low you set it and how long of an auction it was listed for. Part of me would be very anxious to see the final outcome.”

“In what way?” Max asked.

Tapping his finger on the table for a moment, the dark elf leaned back in his chair and seemed lost in thought.

“I think I’ve seen maybe two or three corpses sell rather quickly when Igarra listed them. They often did better when the damage to the body was limited, and she typically was able to kill them without mutilating them in the process. I remember one selling for over ten thousand high tokens.”

“And those are the largest ones?”

Shaking his head, Quilazmore pointed at the number from the tower.

“These are a different token, and I don’t know their name, but it’s separate from what we trade-in. The high token is the largest denomination and often used for exceptional things. Once I remember her muttering about something going for over a million high tokens.”

“And how much would that be?”

“Over three times what we have right now in the vaults.”

Frowning Max shook his head.

“How would you have so little?”

Leaning forward, Quilazmore moved the tablet around and pointed at a number near some writing he recognized but couldn’t read.

21,732 tokens. Would you think that’s a lot?

I have no idea. That’s like asking me if I think something is sweet when I can’t taste it.

“Igarra was constantly converting those tokens to these. The ones I can’t spend. Unlike before, when she was alive, they are now locked and unable to be accessed.

“Tap here and see if you can do anything with them.”

Doing as he was shown, Max tapped the numbers and nothing happened. After a few more tries he gave up.

“Who knows… system things I cannot understand. Still we can sell things, and if you’re willing I can get a listing going on that corpse.”

“Fine… I’ll do that later. I have one last question, and then I need to take care of a few things with my friends.”

Moving back to his chair, Everett took a seat and snorted.

“You seem to have a way of always saving the best for last.”

Grinning, he nodded and pulled out two glass wands the Faction leader had provided him.

“These are items from my world that will bind you to me and make it so you cannot tell my secrets. If you try to, great pain will come. If you break a part of it, you die.”

“And I’m assuming you want us to use those?” Quilazmore asked.

“You don’t have to, but if you want to know more about me and how strong I am, you’ll have to. Anything less and I’ll wait for you to leave.”

“It binds us just to not share your secrets?”

“That’s it.”

The elf and rabbit stared at each other, with Jazzjak moving first.

“I’ll give it a shot. I owe you for everything and still need to have you over for dinner, so I’m dead if I don’t make that happen. Keeping a secret is something I’m good at.”

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After the two had bound themselves, Max explained his skill, surprised that neither of them seemed shocked or scared.

“It’s because of how your world is set up?”

“Yes,” Quilazmore replied. “Basically you have what many in our world would consider the ultimate skill. One could grow to become… well as you are. The world champion.”

“Seems like a cheat.”

The dark elf nodded in agreement with his cohort.

Sighing, Max moved on.

“Okay. If the system says that a skill can be replaced, what does that mean?”

All three men frowned and glanced at each other before returning their gaze to him.

“What do you mean replaced?” Jazzjak asked.

“So… I can replace one of my skills with something of the same name, but I’m unsure what it would do. It’s because I killed Kazrak and could consume two of his skills and then got this option.”

“Can I ask which skill?” Everett asked.

“Let’s say Berserker.”

An appreciative whistle came from Jazzjak.

“You have that ability? That is a strong one, though I never saw you really fight like you have it.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well… I’m guessing your Berserker must differ from the one I know. Out here, that ability makes it so you hit harder and move faster, becoming enraged as you get injured. If you’re not below a certain threshold, it doesn’t kick in but as long as you don’t heal, it will stay active.”

“That sounds dangerous,” Everett stated. “Having to be injured and unable to heal for it to be active.”

“Yes and no,” the rabbit explained. “You have to remember most of us don’t carry healing potions or anything like that into the arena. Typically, you don’t have time to use those as the fighting is non-stop. Pulling a potion out and trying to use it invites your opponent to attack.

“Since you’re often in a state of being injured, the natural ability to hit harder and faster helps because, typically, you need that bonus to overpower whoever or whatever it is you’re facing.”

“Is there a delay in its being used?” Max asked.

“That I’m not certain,” Jazzjak answered. “I mean, not many have it as it requires one to allow themselves to get hurt if they want to get the most out of the skill. I think there was one fighter like ten or more years ago who had a habit of getting down to

maybe a third of their health or lower. At that point it made them very dangerous, but it was also the reason they died."

"I'd probably pass," Everett stated. "You and I know Tanila wouldn't want you to risk yourself like that."

Nodding, Max selected no and watched the option he had been waiting on since he acquired it disappear.

"Anything else?"

Shaking his head at the Faction leader, Max rose and waved.

"I appreciate all your help. If you don't mind, I need to go see everyone else and prepare for the tower."

"You're going to go and enter it?" Quilazmore asked. "I mean… you said you would, but why?"

"Why not? I don't think it will be difficult, and I'm interested to see what a tower on a different world is like. Perhaps we might get something good."

Laughing, the dark elf rolled his eyes.

"Somehow, I doubt the tower has anything you need."

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I can assume then we are also going to turn down Harden Body.

Yeah. I'd prefer not to look all metallic. Besides, I'm already immune to lower-end weapons. Perhaps one day I'll be immune to something higher as well.

You need to be careful in this tower no matter how easy you think it will be. Remember your friends are new to all this, and we're still not certain how things will work out. I'm glad you're listening to those two and not forcing your friends to try and absorb a skill crystal.

It makes sense if they could, but you're right. I do not want any of them to get attention from the system that they don't have to have. Every day we find something new, and I have more questions. What are those tokens for? What can we buy with the ones we have? Should I visit the temple and try to summon Phaius again? What about Ockrim?

Besides gaining some knowledge, I doubt they will help us now. It would use supplies that are needed to advance the others. For now, we just need to focus on getting Rakonath safely set up here with Aerthen, explore that tower, and then return home. We need to complete our world's tower sooner than later. All these side quests are just taking us away from what the gods have told you and what I have said many times.

Sometimes you remind me of my mother… nag nag nag.

And how many times was your mother right?

Grumbling, Max didn’t reply, choosing instead to ignore the smug feeling of Bob being right through their bond.

Links

//[2025-04-22 14:05]

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/110555/villainess-fix-the-damn-plot-a-cultivation-isekai

[L2] https://i.imgur.com/Mwqlq8B.gif

17(1) Chapter 425a - A Gift Given **1)** https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2216872/chapter-425a-a-gift-given**;COPY_OK_FIRST[2025-04-22 13:35],[Fav2025-04-22 13:36], [word2025-04-22 14:22],[publish2025-04-20 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-20 15:02]**

Chapter 425a - A Gift Given

“Thank you for seeing me so quickly, Wekime.”

A simple nod of his head was all the god gave, sitting on his throne in a much larger room than last time.

Easily fifty feet tall and over a hundred feet long, massive columns with different kinds of dragons were engraved into whatever stone made up this room.

Taking a deep breath, Phaius did his best to not let his eyes depart from the golden pair that were studying him.

“I know you have your hand on Max Hoste somehow, and I am here to declare that I am on his side, which hopefully means we are on the same one.”

No reply came, and after an awkward fifteen seconds of silence, he continued.

“Ockrim is also on board with assisting–”

“When I agreed to this meeting, I assumed you had something worthy to tell me,” Wekime interrupted. “What other gods are choosing to assist the boy right now is not something I am concerned with. Until he completes the tower, he is nothing. So

either hurry up and tell me something I need to be made aware of, or we can consider this meeting over.”

As the dragon god rose, Phaius held out his hand.

“He has defeated another world and become a world champion.”

“Of that I am aware of,” Wekime sighed. “He slew one of my children to take that title and that world.”

“Yes! But did you know his skill isn’t what it should be?”

The slightest reaction, barely a twitch of a single eye was displayed, but Phaius saw it.

“What do you mean it isn’t what it should be?”

“His black skill. You know he has one. That is why you are so interested in him and what it will mean once he does defeat the tower. It isn’t controlling him. It hasn’t consumed him as it should have. Max is in control of it.”

Slowly, Wekime lowered himself back into his stone throne and, after getting comfortable, began to tap his three fingers against one of the arms.

“So he has Consume… I wondered which one. And yet you say it hasn’t turned him into a mindless host?”

A grin appeared on Phaius’s lips, and then a moment passed and the dragon god shook his head. “For a moment, I wasn’t certain if you were making a joke, but no. Max Hoste is still in control. There was no hunger, and he was wise enough not to attack Ockrim or me. I did some research and everything I have learned states that the skills do not leave much of their… host as they once were. If he can control the skill, keep it from making him into a monster…”

Wekime’s head began to move up and down, the tiniest appearance of teeth being displayed as he smiled. “Then the piece is even more powerful in this game than one could imagine.”

“Which is why I came. I figured you would want to know this.”

A minute passed as both gods stared at each other.

“It appears you have grown wiser since last we spoke,” Wekime stated. “Gone is the god who ran around like someone had cut off his head, tossing away worlds and power as if they were nothing. Now I see someone who is beginning to understand how the game is played. Tell me, what are you hoping to get from aligning yourself with this boy?”

“We all know the stories and prophecies or call them what you want. Never has someone who was given a black skill been able to maintain control. If Max can keep this control, then the game as it has been played will not be the same. Those who know this ahead of time can make gambles most won’t be in a position to make. They will be able to maximize the mistakes others make. I would like to learn how to

play the game better and when to make the right moves. That is why I have come here."

Silence filled the large room as each god almost appeared to have turned into a statue, neither moving at all for some time.

"Very well, Phaius. I will see if you are ready to learn how this game is played. How many besides Ockrim know what you have told me?"

"None. He agreed that we would keep it a secret after I told him my plan of seeking you out again."

A single talon tapped against his gold-scaled jaw, and Wekime nodded, eyes staring up at the ceiling momentarily. Then he turned his gaze back to the one who stood before him.

"The world you gave me the last time we spoke will be replaced. Along with it, a small gift of power will be given. You have two choices. You can keep these things and gain much. Many gods would be greedy and horde the power I am about to bestow, using it to climb the ranks faster, build a few worlds, or some other foolish endeavor. That, however, is the real test."

An image appeared above Wekime's left hand.

"You know what this is and how rare they are."

"I… do."

"Then the other option is to take what I have given back along with the gift, purchase one of these, and deliver it the next time you see the boy. He shall understand the value of this gift. Perhaps in time, he may come to appreciate what you have done for him, and that will serve you far more than what I am going to give you."

"How could he know how important one of those are? I mean… only if he had one already, and you could only know that he does if you gave him one."

Laughter echoed through the throne room as Wekime stood, his body transforming as the room changed. Gone were the stairs and throne. Now the size of the room tripled, and the god of dragons was present in his full glory.

His immense head came near Phais, warm air washing over the young god as he breathed on him. Each breath carried the smell of death.

"Know this young one. I am a powerful ally to have in this game but you only get one chance. Fail me and the odds of us ever speaking again are so slim, the numbers could run the length of this room if they were written down. Oppose me and I will find someone else to crush you. That is the way the game is played when you align yourself with one like me. Now tell me, Phaius, which path do you still wish to walk?"

His knee hit the ground before the golden snout, head bent slightly.

He couldn't remember having bent his knee like this in so long. Yet there had never been a moment like this one; most likely, one would never come again.

“I agree to walk the path that you are on.”

A deep, low thrum came and then it stopped.

“Lift your head.”

Wekime’s voice seemed to be like a string, pulling Phaius’s eyes upward.

There, before the younger god, was the humanoid dragon again, covered in his shimmering clothes.

“A wise choice. Now go. The game is about to change, and we are about to have some fun, watching as others trip over their actions and find themselves caught in the traps they set.”

Without hesitating, Phaius turned and moved to where a portal awaited him.

For the first time in forever, a smile of pure excitement appeared.

He knew the chance every god hoped for had come.

18(1) Chapter 426 - A Different Tower 1)

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2219267/chapter-426-a-different-tower;**COPY_OK_FIRST[2025-04-22 13:36],[Fav2025-04-22 13:36],[word2025-04-22 14:29],[publish2025-04-21 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-21 15:02]**

Chapter 426 - A Different Tower

Max stood outside with the others, smiling as he watched Aerthen and Rakonath fly through the air above them.

“They look in their element up there,” Tanila stated. “Of course, it is pretty obvious just how much growing your little dragon has to do. Next to her, he seems so small.”

“Small she says,” Cordellia said. “I mean the thing is bigger than a house, and he is *small* . I can’t imagine what he will be like in a decade or two.”

“Bah you two stop that,” he protested. “I don’t want to think about a decade or two right now. We’ve got enough stuff to deal with and worrying about what Rakonath will be like in ten or twenty years isn’t on my list. We must focus on this tower and whether it’s even worth attempting.”

Fowl started to chuckle until an elbow from their healer caught his ribs.

“What did you hit me for? He’s acting like the leader.”

“Because it’s not funny. Max is right,” she replied. “We’re on a different world and walking into something none of us have any ideas about. He might be safe from whatever is on the other side, but that doesn’t mean we are. So let’s focus for a bit and see what happens. I, for one, don’t want to deal with any surprises or problems.”

***

“What the hell are those!?”

Batrire’s shout made Max laugh as he slaughtered the four creatures that had run toward him.

These things are as big as an ogre… yet they use their hands to move like a gorilla.

You seemed more focused on that than the six tongues that extend from their mouth and keep trying to wrap you up?

Bob’s comment only made him laugh louder as his new weapon took on the shape of a two-handed sword, and he cleaved the creature clean through in a single swipe.

“They’re dead! Move up!”

He could hear Batrire cursing under her breath and wanted to pull out a bar of soap, yet refrained, knowing she wasn’t in the mood.

“Of course, the first tower floor is a dark forest with things like that and the other creatures. I guess we should be glad none of these are that strong.”

Nodding at Fowl, Max pointed at the remains of what Fowl had killed.

“They look like a troll or something like one made love with a shark and a crab. Whoever… or whatever species this is… I’m not sure how they continue to repopulate,” Max stated.

“Perhaps it’s really dark when they get together.”

Chuckling at his friend's joke, Max stored a few pieces of the bodies and checked on the trio that Tanila and Cordellia were helping.

“You… we are grateful, Ifrit!”

Two male catkins and a female wolfkin bowed low, each wearing a hodgepodge of leather and chain armor.

“We save them, and he gets the thanks,” their ranger whispered, knowing full well he would hear her.

“Perhaps you three should return to the entrance and stay closer. The further you get in here the worse it is as you saw how many came.”

All three nodded and bowed low again.

“Wait,” he said as they started to leave. “We’re not going to take all of these things. If you want, help yourself, but be safe.”

“You… you’re sure?” the wolfkin asked. “They are your kills and thus are your spoils.”

Nodding, Max pointed at the fifty-plus dead creatures that were scattered over a hundred-yard area within the forest.

“Again, we’re leaving for the next level. You three, stay safe. Also check in with the new office for tower climbers they just opened in the city. I’ll tell them you three are coming and perhaps they can assist you with getting some better equipment. You also might look for a fourth member, as I think you might be able to go further on this floor safely with one more.”

The three of them all lifted a fist to their chest and bowed.

“You honor us too much, Ifrit,” the wolfkin stated. “We shall carry the story of your kindness. A rare thing in our city.”

***

“Five floors in a single day seems crazy,” Fowl stated as he put his foot up on a stool, resting his mug of ale on his stomach. “I mean, none of them were difficult but the kinds of things we fought were…”

“Ugly? Misshapen? Out of a nightmare?” Cordellia asked.

“All of the above,” Batrire muttered. “What kind of floor needs an eyeball with tentacles with mouths and shoots energy beams out of its eye?”

“A crappy one,” their warrior said.

Tanila said nothing as she snuggled up against Max.

Holding her tight, his hand rested on the small bump he knew was their child.

Two years… it’s going to take two years for this one to be born.

It's better than the four it takes for an elf. Or perhaps not. She is strong, fighting in the tower next to you, never complaining about how tired she might be or how the constant drain might impact her.

And yet you bring it up again…

You would be smart not to mention it to her unless you want to endure another hole being torn in your backside.

Chuckling, he shook his head and tapped his temple when she looked at him.

“Aren’t you tired?” she asked.

“No… not really. My body has changed since the first time I arrived here. I don’t need as much sleep or food. Don’t get me wrong, I enjoy resting, especially being beside you, but I can easily go a week or two without it. The stronger I get, the less I need it.”

Covering her mouth as she yawned, Tanila nodded.

“So, no boss on the 5th floor. I guess it’s every 9th one?”

“That’s what I hear, though no one has reached the 19th floor yet. I have no doubt we’ll be the first if we want it. I’m curious to see what the first one is like.”

“I’m just glad to see that we encountered other people in the tower,” Tanila said. “After almost never seeing other climbers, it’s good to know we’re not alone.”

Smiling, Max just nodded and gave her a gentle kiss.

“Get a room,” Cordellia said as she winked at them. “From what I hear there are a lot of rooms in this ugly silver place. Some are purple and some are silver. I mean who made that horrible decision?”

Laughing, Max shrugged.

“I remember the first time I laid eyes upon it. It was a bit gaudy. As I already mentioned, there were over twenty portals that went to different places. The amount of power she used to maintain a certain look and control was unbelievable.”

“Still having portals to the other rings within the city would be a good thing. Right?” Cordellia asked.

“It would, but if I need to go there I can always bother Quilazmore to assist me. He has a skill similar to mine except the cooldown and number of places he can go to are way better. Of course, it only works from a set home point and is at the city's center.”

“Makes me a little jealous,” Fowl stated. “Imagine being able to pop into any ale house within range whenever you wanted!”

“That’s what you’d use a power like that for?” Batrire asked. “Drinking?”

“Well… uh… and to take you to shops you want to go.”

Rolling her eyes, their healer shook her head. “Sometimes I wonder about you. It’s a good thing I love you.”

“Bah, we’re married. You don’t have to talk sweet to me, I’m going to always give you what you want.”

A retching sound came from their ranger, and Max started to stand.

“On that note, I think it's time for us to turn in. Tomorrow morning we can do the tower again. Provided nothing goes bad we should be on the 9th floor later in the day.”

***

“So what did you say about nothing going wrong?” Fowl asked, elbowing Max as they stared at the puzzle before them.

“Yeah, yeah… Batrire’s already giving me an earful. I’m not sure if I should be excited or sad about the fact we’re facing puzzles on the 8th floor.”

They were now in a room where the doors had sealed themselves, a magical barrier surrounding the fifty-by-fifty-foot room. On the stone floor of the room they were in were 42 tiles, each with different symbols that Max could read, yet none of them made sense to him.

“I’m almost done cataloging all of them,” Cordellia informed everyone as she drew the symbols in her book with the definitions of each one.

“Sand, bread, blood, fire, hammer, scythe… I mean… there is a connection right?”

All he could do was shrug at Tanila who looked as lost as he was.

“I’m guessing it’s something a local person from this world would understand,” Max answered. “I’ve seen most of these things and there are a few that I think I know but over half of them are a mystery. Take for example, the sand and glass one. I’m fairly certain they go together. The child and mother seem like a good pair and the seed and tree. Some… I’m just not sure.”

“Finished!”

Their ranger sighed and put away her journal and pencil, moving to join everyone else.

“So… how does this start?” Fowl asked.

“You be yourself. Go touch one and see what happens,” Batrire answered. “Don’t worry though, I’m pretty confident I can heal you in time if something bad happens.”

Had their warrior been a medusa, their healer would have been a statue. He moved to where the first tile was and touched it.

All of them began to glow, and then each one had the same image of the tower on top.

“Uh… now what?”

Max moved to where his friend was and bent down, touching the closest one. It shimmered and revealed a catkin. Touching the next one made it shimmer and it revealed a child. Two seconds passed and both glowed, returning to the tower's image.

“It’s a pattern game,” Tanila said. “I’ve done lots of these as a child. Usually they’re pretty straightforward.”

“Except we’re in a tower, and it can’t be so easy that we keep trying out pairs until we find the right match,” Cordellia pointed out. “Is there a time limit or a number of guesses?”

When he touched the two next to the first ones he had revealed, water and a rabbit were revealed. Then, as before, the tiles returned to the tower image.

“So we keep guessing until we get a match we know. Should I record them?” their ranger asked.

“No, I can remember them. Don’t forget I’ve got points in intelligence.”

***

“I’m guessing this wasn’t how the puzzle was intended to go,” Tanila called out from inside the dimensional space. “You’re cheating, and you know it.”

Max shrugged and moved to the tiles closest to him. They were floating in the air as he was, somehow suspended by magic, yet unable to support him when he had tried standing on them. Bob was using their flight skill to keep from falling into the pool of acid that had been under the stone floor.

It seems kind of dangerous, as after the twenty-first flip, the floor started to fall from the edges of the room.

Again, a group of people from this world would most likely be okay with solving this puzzle, unlike us, who have flubbed the last seven matches.

Touching the one that was the symbol for air, Max moved to where the next tile to attempt was. The symbol for leaves appeared and both tiles glowed green, vanishing from the remaining ones.

“How do those two have anything in common?” Cordellia asked.

“Beats me, but we’re almost done. Trial and error. And flying. Seems like a good way to win.”

***

Appearing outside the tower, Max sensed the presence of a few others and took a step forward, putting himself between those and his group.

“You’ve grown, Ifrit.”

The voice made him smile, and Max knew who was before him as the insect he immediately recognized by sound appeared.

“Holy hells, Kauakan! What happened to you!?!”

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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Links

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https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2221982/book-5-audio-live-on-amazon;**COPY_OK_FIRST[2025-04-22 15:10],[Fav2025-04-22 15:09],[word2025-04-22 15:11],[publish2025-04-22 14:37],[Last_edit2025-04-22 14:37]**

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Get your listening on here![L1]

Book 5 audio is live on amazon!

If you had asked me in Nov 2023 what it would be like to listen to my own story, I'd have laughed.

Never did I imagine that this adventure would rise so high and go so far!

As I draw near the end of book 9 (writing tower floor 99 & 100 soon), I am so grateful to each and every one of you who have supported me on this journey!

So if you like audio - give it a listen. All I can say is as I listen to book 6 (haha I get the early release) I'm in awe at how awesome of a job Johnathan did!

***

As Max and the team defeat yet another boss in the tower, they quickly realize that they are facing harder things than most.

Each of them must work together to overcome challenges that test not only their strength and power but also their minds as new and dangerous puzzles begin to appear.

Yet behind every rainbow and new opportunity that comes, someone is there trying to steal the freedom one gains.

Their power is growing, and the realization of how strong they have become and the truth that there are still others even more so, they must work together to climb the tower and acquire the power needed to be safe from those who hunt Max.

Links

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[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/amazon/B0DNKQKRTJ

19/427(1) Chapter 427 - New Games 1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2222040/chapter-427-new-games;COPY_OK[2025-04-22 15:09],[Fav2025-04-22 15:10],[word2025-04-22 15:20],[publish2025-04-22 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-22 15:02]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 427 - New Games

Kauakan's chittering laughter made Max join in. The insect stepped up, bowing slightly and crossing both of his sword-like arms.

Like the rest of his body, each of them was now covered in shimmering metal. That wasn't the only immediate change he noticed, realizing that the insect was a foot taller than before.

"I have evolved thanks to you and Jazzjak. Do you like it?"

"It looks good on you. Very dangerous. When did you get the idea for it? Also, I heard you're still running the arena in your ring."

The others of his party gasped as he sensed them appearing, knowing their eyes had just adjusted to the tower's departure.

"What in the gods is–"

"Everyone, this is Kauakan," Max said before anyone could possibly offend the warrior. "He is the one who gave me a spot in my first arena fight and helped me progress through the city. Kauakan, this is Tanila, Cordellia, Fowl, and Batrire."

Greetings came from his party and the insect bowed again. He walked slowly and then carefully bent to a knee before their mage, resting a blade against the stone bricks that made up the ground around the tower.

"It is an honor to meet the ones he spoke so highly of. Even if he hadn't told me your name, I would have known you were the elf he loved."

Tanila's cheeks turned slightly red, and she bobbed her head.

"That means more than you might realize," she replied. "Thank you for watching over him."

"Surely you jest! He is the one who took care of me and provided protection against those who might end my life. Even now, he has taken care of me and is paying for

the shards I have acquired. The best thing he has given me is learning what a true friend is. A rare thing to find one like him in this world."

Max moved to where the arena leader was and held out his fist, chuckling when Kauakan tapped his bladed arm against it.

"I'm surprised to see you here. Should I ask?"

"Oh, it's nothing special. I planned on adventuring with these two to help them grow stronger for the arena. This catkin is Huklano and the lionkin is Gomorodo. Both have potential, so I am hedging my bets as you once told me."

The two warriors behind him kneeled and mimicked the actions of the one who had brought them.

"So you just happened to be here while I was?"

"Not at all. I had planned to take them sometime soon, but word reached me that you were doing the impossible again, so we arrived a little while ago, and I decided to wait and see if you were beating the floors as fast as I had heard. What one are you headed to next?"

"The 9th," Max replied.

A chittering noise of laughter came, and Cordellia started to giggle.

"He sounds–"

"Don't forget how it feels," Tanila said.

Blushing immediately, their ranger winced.

"Forgive me… I–"

"No need to apologize. I thought the same thing. Your voice is so much nicer than those here with you. The pitch is perfect while the men, especially the ones in your group, sound like someone is dragging metal across my blades."

"Is he flirting with her?" Fowl whispered to Batrire, who shrugged.

"Still, the 9th floor is impressive in just two days. I wish you luck in your attempt. Feel free to come to my ring sometime. I will host a fight in your honor. Perhaps you could even just show a fraction of your power but not kill everyone in the process."

"If my schedule allows that, I would like to," Max replied. "Let me know if you need anything. I'm happy to help."

Shaking his head, both of his metal mandibles opened and closed.

"You have helped me more than I could ever repay. And yes, I remember that friends do not have to repay, but still I cannot ask for more."

Giving Kauakan a gentle tap against his blade, Max pointed at the portal.

"We're going to head in. I'll have Jazzjak send you a message later."

“Be safe, Ifrit. May your glory burn forever.”

***

“So this is new,” Fowl quickly pointed out. “Where are we?”

Frowning, Max knew exactly what kind of place they were in.

“This is like the waiting rooms for the arena. I think we’re about to be in one.”

All around them were white stone walls and a very tiny display screen that had yet to light up on one wall. Light came from nowhere and everywhere, casting a perfect glow that left no shadows.

“So… we’re about to be in an arena?”

“I’m not sure, but I think so.”

Fowl grunted and banged his shield and weapon against each other.

“Batrire?”

“I’ll cast my enchantments. That’s what I love about you, always thinking ahead.”

Tanila pulled on Max’s arm and drew close to his ear.

“Are we really about to be in something like you were?”

“I’d bet gold on it. Still, it’s silent and that’s unusual.”

Two arena scenarios? What gives?

Let me pull out the magical item that tells me the future… oh wait… neither of us has one… The tower is the tower, and we are in one from a different world. Part of this seems normal. Why wouldn’t a world with such things also have them in the tower?

Grunting, Max summoned a few chairs and set them down.

“Take a seat, I’ll try something.”

Moving to a white wall, he touched it with his hand and tried using his Stone Mastery, but he could not do anything to the magically imbued material.

“Performance problems?” Fowl asked as he watched Max lower his hand.

“Yeah… we’re in a box similar to the one I would be put up in during an arena fight and often there was a door here that Quilazmore would create. I was trying to see if I could form one as well but I can’t.”

“Are we in trouble?” his friend whispered.

“That depends on how this works. If we fight as a group, then I’m confident it won’t be a problem. If it’s individual fights… I think we should all be fine. A lot just depends on what we face.”

Grunting, the dwarf shoved him playfully and pointed at the three women watching them.

“Let’s sit down with them so they don’t think we’re doing something wrong.”

***

Hours passed, and everyone was on edge no matter what kind of small talk, card games, or books they tried to read.

Finally, the display activated and an image appeared on it.

“God’s he’s ugly,” Cordellia stated.

Gazing upon them was a being of some kind that looked like jello and yet had a brain and six eyes floating in the orange goo.

“Welcome, climbers! Your opponents have arrived! Prepare yourself, as your team shall be transported to the arena below in five minutes. Know that what you face will bring honor! Glory! And most importantly, powerful items!”

Afterward, a weird sound like a collective group of something cheering came, and each of them glanced at each other for a moment.

“Now, once you reach the arena floor, a five-second timer will begin counting down. Be ready to kill; the others won’t hesitate to do the same! And good luck!”

Their ranger snorted as she shook her head.

“He… it… whatever that thing was, it sounded like they were underwater trying to talk.”

“Who cares,” Tanila said as she stood. “Max, what are your thoughts?”

“Standard formation, Fowl near you three, I’ll take point and we see who or what we’re up against. It said opponents, so I’d bet there will be more than one. Still… for it to say they arrived… a climber from another world?”

“Don’t start to think like that,” Batrire quickly said. “We’re fighting for our lives, not making friends from a different world.”

“Something always dies,” Fowl stated. “I’d prefer it never to be us.”

Max could see the determination on each of their faces. No smiles, no jokes. Each of them understood that whatever happened next, no matter what, they had to live and something had to die for that to happen.

You all have changed. This is good.

Bob’s comment felt right, and Max knew they had reached an agreement in the previous month.

Nothing will stop us from finishing the tower. We’ll burn down whatever we must to do so.

***

As his eyes adjusted to the space around them, Max heard the reactions of his teammates, each of them getting to see who or what exactly their opponents were. A small arena only a hundred yards around, stone floors, and forty-foot-tall walls kept them inside an enclosed area.

Seven half-spider, half-muscular, dark elf-like creatures faced them. All of their opponents had hair so white it almost seemed like the color of perfect snow, secured in braids that ran over their shoulders.

Four of them wore plate armor, while three had what appeared to be cloth that stuck to their bodies.

Dark faces, red eyes and tiny horns gave off a demonic look as they all began to wave weapons and gestured at them.

“Bags of flesh! We shall feast!”

“I call the small ones! You can have the hairless one!”

Laughing, Max shook his head and spun his weapon around, having formed it back into a bladed spear.

“Should I ask?”

“Oh, the one with the bow, it wants you to eat,” he informed his dwarven friend. “It appears none of them want me, as I have no hair.”

“You can understand them?” Cordellia asked.

“I can, but I won’t try to communicate with them. Something tells me it won’t matter. Besides, the timer has started. You four do whatever you want. I’ll protect if they get close. Let’s see how they stack up against you.”

A moment after he finished talking, a bell rang, and the seven opponents spread out. Three armored ones with shields and spears approached them while the one with a bow began to fire shots in their direction.

Max sensed the air wall Tanila summoned and let the arrow bounce harmlessly off it instead of trying to block it.

An ice spear began to form from their mage, and an arrow flew from Cordellia’s bow, impacting with the shield of the largest spider foe in the middle and shattering it.

“How?! Attack!”

Spells came at them, one a web of some sort launching from the caster in the back with a large wooden staff that glowed. Next to that one was one with two bone wands or staves of some sort and a dark orange liquid began to flow from their open mouth, up into the air and at the spot they stood.

“I got it!” Tanila called out as she summoned another air wall before the rising jet of liquid, causing it to splatter all over the stone bricks before them.

Max stood there, watching as Fowl raced forward, finding himself about half the size of their opponents. His returned hammer swung and crushed the leg it struck in a single strike.

Done imbuing mana into the ice spear, Tanila threw it to impale the warrior on the left, skewering it completely and sending it hurtling back toward its allies.

Max thought he saw a look of panic as the remaining spider creatures seemed to stop their approach. Their mouths started to open, and their black skin scrunched up into folds.

“What are they? How is this possible?!”

Two more fell immediately, arrows taking their heads off, and in seconds, the only one left alive was on the ground, each of its eight legs crushed by their warrior, trying to drag itself away from the dwarf that had brought it down.

“Eat me, will you!?” Fowl shouted. “Try and see what I taste like!”

A hiss and scream that was much higher than any sound Cordellia had ever made came from the beast.

“End it!” Batrire shouted.

A single blow to the head squashed its skull like a bug under one’s foot.

Three seconds later, a bell sounded, and a display appeared in the air.

Once more, the thick, orange being appeared, bouncing around and shaking from side to side.

“Congratulations, climbers! You have… defeated your opponent in record time! Prepare for the…”

Its voice stopped, and though it had no eyelids or anything else to give a visual cue of how it might react, Max knew something was up when its entire body froze, not a single part of it jiggling for the first time since they had seen it.

Somethings wrong…

Oh yes… and I’m certain we’re about to find out what.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Links

//[2025-04-22 15:20]

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/amazon/B0DKYVN266

20/428(1) Chapter 428 - New Loot 1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2224647/chapter-428-new-loot;COPY_OK_First[2025-04-23 15:30],20/428(1[Fav2025-04-23 15:28],[word2025-04-23 15:30],[publish2025-04-23 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-23 15:02])Chapter 428 - New Loot - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1,L2]

Chapter 428 - New Loot

“What’s going on? Is something wrong?” Batrire asked as everyone stared up at the blank screen.

“It’s probably because of where we are from,” Max replied, pointing at the corpses. “We’ll find out soon enough, but for now, let's store this stuff and see what we can do with it.”

It didn’t take long for them to strip the arena floor clean of the corpses, ignoring the purple blood that had flowed out from holes they had created in the bodies of their foe. Soon they stood around again, and no one was sure what would happen.

Minutes passed, and then the screen flickered to life.

“Tower climbers… something is off,” the orange blob of whatever said, his voice sounding a little deeper. “You are not from this world or any part of this… program. You, Ifrit, are recognized as one who has made waves within the system of planets with access to our protocol program. Tell me, are these the ones you mentioned in your broadcast?”

He could feel everyone’s eyes on him, and Max took two steps to separate himself slightly from his friends.

“I am. You’ve seen what I recorded, right?”

A gurgling laughter came, and the shape bounced up and down.

“Many have seen it. For one of your power to be at this level… I would almost say I feel guilty having sentenced those to a quick death. Still, they knew the dangers. Now then… the usual rewards for such a thing are not going to work… the… system will not allow me to grant you items or essences that your body could use. It has however allowed me to make some requests, and your rewards will be… unusual but perhaps they will work for you.”

A bell sounded, and a white disc with a tiny green chest appeared a few yards away.

“Inside is all that you will be given. Please take it and leave.”

Once more, the screen was blank, and Max glanced back at his friends, seeing their eyes locked on the small chest.

“I guess we’ll see what we got,” he said. “Fowl, you want to open it?”

“Nah, Cordellia can. I think she’s overly excited about getting a peek.”

Smiling, their ranger moved to the chest that barely came to her knees, bent down, and lifted the lid.

“Potions… of some kind.”

Everyone joined her and stared inside the chest. No swirling portal or anything like it was present. Instead, it was a standard metal chest with five small potions of swirling colors.

She reached inside and plucked them out, handing one to each of them.

[Identify Potion]

*****

Elixir of Gains

+10 to a Random Stat

+10 to a Random Stat

*****

“Uh… is this thing seriously going to give me twenty points?” Fowl asked as he swirled the potion around near his face.

“That’s what the description says,” Tanila stated. “Would you expect it to do something else?”

“No… still I’m almost happier to have this than a piece of equipment that I can’t use,” their warrior replied. “I mean… twenty points is pretty good even if it ends up in my intelligence.”

“We could only hope,” Batrire declared as she gave him a wink.

Smiling, Max stored his and motioned to the rest of them.

“There’s the portal. Let’s take it, and then you can drink it later when you want. We would probably be better off leaving like we were asked for now.”

“Asked or told?” Tanila said as she moved to join him.

Shrugging, he grinned.

“I guess we’ll never know.”

***

“This world is so different,” Rakonath said as Max scratched the scales on his neck. “We flew around for almost a day, and the vastness of the sand was a bit overwhelming. How you survived for so long is a testament to your strength.”

“It was more of my desire to see Tanila again,” he replied. “What else did you see?”

“Aerthen showed me the large mountain cliffs you mentioned. They went on for a while and some creatures lived up there but we ignored them for now. This was more about exploring and getting waypoints determined for when I get to go out alone if you still plan on leaving me here.”

“I’m not *leaving* you here. This is a chance for you and Aerthen to get strong in an environment I believe is better suited for helping you grow stronger. Part of me wants to take you into the tower. The other part of me wants to keep you safe. Until I’m certain you won’t be at risk of dying, I cannot bear the thought of fighting beside you yet.”

A snort sent some mucus flying and the silver dragon shook his head.

“I’m just excited that soon you should be able to ride on my back. Aerthen says that I could probably carry you right now but not for long and that it would be best to be stronger before I try. Perhaps before you must leave, we can attempt it.”

“I look forward to that day,” Max informed his dragon, patting the scales softly. “There is still so much I want to do, and yet I feel unable to do most of it. It’s like everything pulls me in different directions, and I have to decide what is more important.”

“You feel drawn to the tower and the need to complete it, don’t you? What happens after you pass it?”

Grinning, he shrugged and leaned against the silver scales, sliding down until he was resting on the floor.

“No one knows, but each day Bob and I work to piece things together a little better.”

“That is the one inside your head with you?”

“Yup. It’s funny… or maybe weird that both of you can sense the other when you are talking to me. Still, he is an ally. Just as close of a friend as you and the others. Igarra had defeated the tower, and Bob thinks this is her world… something she crafted or created after passing it. We’re not sure how it works, and no one has solid answers, and I didn’t get the answers I wanted from Phaius–”

“The human god on your world?”

“Correct. Next time we meet I’m going to have a lot more questions for him, and hopefully, this time he’ll be able to answer them,” Max replied before sighing. “So many things are kept secretive. It makes me wonder why.”

“I understand what you mean. I have often tried to reach out to my Father in dreams, but nothing has come of it. I can sense his presence far off, but it is almost like he is

hiding himself from me… distancing himself from me. Aerthen says it is because he is perhaps trying to protect us. Similar to what you are doing with me."

Frowning, Max could sense the frustration of his dragon.

"You don't agree with my decision to keep myself from you those first few months?"

"While I did not like it, I understand why you had to. There are many lives dependent upon you. I myself am one of the many, and anyone can easily see who sits at the top of that list."

A slight thrum came from the growing dragon, and Max chuckled with him.

"Do you feel alone?"

Max's question cut off Rakonath, and for a moment the two of them sat there in silence. His hand scratching a scale was the only action either took as the young dragon thought.

"No… Sometimes I felt like a part of me was missing, but Aerthen has never let me feel alone. She always reminds me of the wisdom of the path we are on. Even now, she understands how coming here benefits both her and me. Back on the other world, we might find ourselves in conflict with the gold dragon, Kemruss. Neither of us wishes to test our strength against him right now. Being here, with your blessing and the ability to fly away if needed, we can roam, and she can teach me to hunt prey of a different kind."

"You do realize it will be a month before I can return… possibly longer, depending on what is taking place back home."

His dragon bent his neck until both silver eyes were locked on Max.

"I do. Do not forget time isn't the same to me. Those first few weeks I was an eggling and had yet to learn the simple things I needed to. Now, I see the bigger picture. We will spend hundreds of years together, and a month or two now will mean little."

Shaking his head, Max patted the jaw that was near him.

"You're pretty smart for someone under a year old."

"I owe it all to Aerthen."

***

Max flipped through the sheets of items that Everett had written down while they were gone, scanning the information about crafting materials, weapons, potions, and armor.

"What are the top three items for us to focus on?"

The faction leader tapped the top of the page he had laid out before him, and Quilazmore nodded after receiving a questioning look.

"Weapon wise…" Everett said, pausing and shaking his head at apparent disbelief, "You'll not replace that one anytime soon. Knowing what you can craft means you

can do a far better job than most of the stuff for sale at any time. An occasional item might appear to have value, but those are so costly and do not make good use of the tokens you acquire.

“Armor is similar… but with the few pieces you shared with me, again, we’re back to looking at a very short list of things we think would be worth acquiring. That leaves us to crafting materials as well as potions and elixirs.”

Max verified that the sheet he was reading from matched the one Everett used.

“This first one is a crafting material, and knowing what you’re looking for is probably high on our list.”

*****

Star Fragment - Rumored to be a piece of a fallen star, though many consider them a variant of a meteor or other falling object. Most are smaller than the size of a normal person’s hand yet are well known for their unfailing strength and ability to absorb magical energy. Takes a special forge to smelt.

*****

“Your friend is right,” Quilazmore said as he picked at his teeth with a nail. “Those are rare, but if you can acquire one, I’m certain you and Buwingrid could use it to create something special. Just know it would most likely cost most of our current tokens. However, I have started the process of listing the corpse you have, and I expect it to fetch a fair price.”

“About that… I want to try one more thing before we sell it. I may know someone who would want it.”

Both black eyebrows came together as the dark elf studied him before shrugging.

“It’s your trophy. I’m just here to help facilitate the transfer of materials and tokens.”

Clearing his throat, Everett pointed to the second item on the list.

*****

Blessed Elixir - This elixir appears about every three to four months and often sells immediately after being listed. Each time, it appears that the selling price continues to grow and is often one of the top four most expensive items. Rumors state that this elixir can grant anywhere from 50 to 100 stat points across two random attributes. A person can only drink one of these in their lifetime.

*****

Whistling, Max gave an appreciative nod.

“That’s a lot of stats… how good are they?”

“As I informed your friend, they are quite expensive, and Igarra spent quite a large sum to acquire hers.”

“Was that a recent purchase?” Max asked.

Quilazmore shook his head and tapped on the tablet on the table.

“No… I can see a history of what she purchased. Most of her purchases were spent on the currency we cannot access but occasionally she did purchase something for herself. This was one of them.”

Everett grinned as he leaned back in his chair.

“Could you imagine? Getting lucky and getting a hundred in two stats you wanted? That’s forty levels!”

“What would you do if they ended up in the stats you didn’t want?” Max asked.

Shrugging the Faction leader never lost his smile.

“I’m certain I can use the points somewhere. Besides, an increase like that is worth it no matter what stat it ends up in.”

Leaning forward, Everett tapped the third item from the top.

“Which leaves us with the most difficult and hardest decision we can make.”

****

Planetary Communication Ring - This ring requires a second one and each must be purchased independently. Upon acquiring two rings, they may be bound and up to five may be connected to one ***master*** *ring. Once a week the ring may be activated and communication can take place for twenty minutes across worlds.*

*****

“A way to communicate between here and our home planet,” Max said slowly.

That would help ease your mind and allow for long-term planning and troubleshooting.

So you agree with me that this should be the first item we focus on?

I do… and you’ll need three at least: one for here, one for you, and another for Everett or whoever is going to have it back in your world.

Nodding to himself, Max saw both men looking at him, waiting for his response.

“Get three. We’ll figure out what we need to do.”

A slight hiss came as Quilazmore sucked air in through his sharp teeth.

“Those aren’t cheap nor are they extremely expensive…if you want three, I can make it happen. It should take no longer than a week.”

Storing the papers Everett had given him, Max nodded.

“That’s fine. And start selling a few of Igarra’s dragon scales. I spoke with Buwingrid, and I know a market exists. Perhaps even a tooth or two as I know we don’t have a

ton of them left. Let’s remind the worlds out there that she’s dead by my hands. Perhaps we can prevent anyone else from being stupid in the coming weeks.”

Laughter filled the room as Quilazmore laid his head back and roared.

“Oh, Max… for once I hope you’re right,” he finally got out.

Links

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[L1] https://www.royalroadcdn.com/public/covers-large/109847-sidekick-fights-back.jpg?time=1745118117

[L2] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/109847/sidekick-fights-back

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21/429(1) Chapter 429 - Powering Up 1)

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2227277/chapter-429-powering-up;**COPY_OK_First[2025-04-24 15:04],21/421(1[Fav2025-04-24 15:02],[word2025-04-24 15:03],[publish2025-04-24 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-24 15:02])Chapter 429 - Powering Up - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 429 - Powering Up

Sog’thollech tore off another piece of Kazrak’s corpse, lifting it to one of the many mouths on his misshapen body, and stuffing it inside.

“You are far too kind to me,” the demon said, one of the mouths on his shoulder speaking this time. “How did you know such a thing would benefit my recovery?”

“Honestly, I didn’t, but after talking about it with a friend, I realized it seemed like a good idea. If it didn’t, then all I would have lost was some blood, which is easily replaced.”

Laughter came from some of the mouths upon Sog’thollech’s back as his hands continued stuffing the ones on the front of his body.

“So, can you fight? I mean… like at all?”

“I can. It will just be… difficult. Those on my world who take moments like this to capitalize upon the falling of one like myself have been very… hesitant. It is not typical behavior, and the truth is that my king sent an envoy to let me know that there would be a moment of protection. Is this something you made happen?”

Frowning, Max wondered if that was even possible.

Thoughts?

It’s a potential theory… you and I are one… if someone could figure out who you are, then it would make sense that a god as old as this one could too. Perhaps…

He could sense the thoughts that ran through his mind as Bob considered some different things.

“Sog’thollech, are you able to… say smell my blood or sense it?”

“Easily. It is like a… an aroma I find very pleasing. Yours has a very distinct scent to it.”

If that is the case, perhaps then the Demon King can smell it on him. There would be no doubt that he smelled yours in the dungeon when we fought. Logic would dictate that we were and are different. No doubt, as Phaius and Ockrim have said, the other gods now know about the presence of the black skills.

If the demon could determine the world we came from and had some information about us being on that world, then he would know that Sog’thollech and you are bound together.

And he would want to keep that connection because it might serve him… which is why he might do such a rare thing to protect him.

Why not ally with someone you already know who does not like you? It makes sense, but it's twisted.

“Sog’thollech, does your king… is he… a god?”

Laughing again, the demon shook his head and paused the never-ending shoveling of body parts into his mouths.

“You ask that like you’re uncertain. Surely, you have learned enough from me to understand that my King isn’t a god but simply a demon who has risen in power. The true god of my race is far greater and does not talk with one like myself. He is…”

Sog’thollech’s multiple appendages spread out and covered as much space as possible.

“Words fail me as I consider how to convey this best, but perhaps the word ‘vast’ does the idea justice. If he chose, every one of my kind could be swallowed up by him in a moment. The hall I reside in wouldn’t fit a tiny portion of him unless he wished to lower himself to such a thing. Rules… rules are what bind my race, and his rules are absolute. Only a fool would risk upsetting him and bringing his wrath upon them.”

“So then the dungeon that I entered on my world, where I had to fight my way to his arena and defeat his champion, was that not him?”

Every eye blinked rapidly and four hands pointed clawed fingers at Max.

“That was you! I knew it!”

Suddenly, Sog’thollech broke out in a weird, bobbing dance as his misshapen body moved around. The entire time he howled with laughter.

“So many wondered who you were. I… I knew it had to be you! Who else could match your description and suddenly have the power to summon me!”

“How long have you known?” Max asked, unable to hide the grin he felt growing.

“Only in the last few months. It made sense as rumors swirled around my people, but my rise to power matched yours. To know that the one that I am bound to defied my own god…”

Sog’thollech shuddered and cackled again.

“Is this a good thing? Doesn’t this put a target on you?”

“Oh no it explains a little bit why some things have happened. You just confirmed why the king sent an envoy and why I was given some protection when most would be left to fend for themselves. Multiple times now you have protected me from impending death. Once again, I find myself in debt to you.”

Waving a hand, Max shifted from where he stood, just a few yards away from the open doors, watching as Sog’thollech stood near the partially eaten corpse he had tossed into the hall on the other side of the portal.

“So in a few days, I may summon you if you think that would work. We’ll be in the tower on this world, and if you are able to fight and kill them, perhaps the souls will help you recover even more.”

Bowing low, Sog’thollech slowly rose.

“I stand ready to come when you beckon. Be safe, Max, and thank you for the friendship you have given.”

***

“This place is amazing,” Fowl stated before tearing off a piece of meat from one of the three sticks he held in his hand. “So many new foods and drinks to try.”

Batrire nodded in agreement, using her sleeve to wipe the juices running into her beard.

“For once, I agree with Shorty,” Tanila said. “I feel like we’ve been missing out.”

Laughing, Max motioned to the different shops around them as they walked down another street in the inner part of the city.

Stares were a constant thing from all the species present, but everyone gave the man they knew as the champion of this world and his group a wide berth.

“Is this what it is like back home?” Max asked.

Tanila shook her head.

“I wasn’t allowed to just walk down the street like this. To do something like this without an honor guard would be considered bad form. It’s one of the reasons why I wanted to get away. To see life and experience other cities like this.”

“All these shops, what is it they offer?” Batrire asked.

“Can’t you tell from the signs?”

Their healer shook her head and summoned another meat kabob from her inventory.

“Some of the moving signs give a good description, but I can’t read all the words on some of them. Others make no sense… I mean, a molting shop? Someone helps an insect molt?”

All Max could do was shrug as he knew exactly the sign she was talking about.

“It’s like that shop back in Nalgrun that offered birthing help,” he replied. “I asked you why someone had to have a shop for that, and you told me *because* . Does that mean it’s limited to a specific need I’ll never understand? There is likely a need, and obviously, it is big enough that someone can afford a shop space and offer it.”

Batrire grunted and bobbed her head before taking a bite of her kabob.

“Wait… you understood what he just said?” Fowl asked, glancing between the pair. “I… bah forget it…”

They took their time moving through the city, Max occasionally talking with a few who felt brave enough to offer thanks or congratulations on reclaiming his claim on their world.

Eventually, they arrived at the shop he had been headed towards this entire time.

A bright sign had a box that would explode, turning into a mechanical creature like a clockwork that danced for a minute before vanishing and replaying again.

Nimyn’s Mechanical Wonders

“That’s what we’ve come for?” their ranger asked, glancing at the building which appeared just like all the other standard ones except for its sign.

“Yup, I”ve been meaning to find a shop like this for a while and Jazzjak did some research and told me this is the best one in town.”

“And that’s because you feel you need help to create something?” Fowl asked. “I mean… you’re the one who never seems to have problems creating the impossible.”

Max knew he was frowning a little as he nodded and motioned for everyone to gather closer. He pulled out the sound-dampening device Everett had given him and activated it.

“I spoke with Aerthen, and the core inside Rakonath is growing and soon the window of opportunity to borrow it and try to create a power core from it may pass. There is a lot of risk, and everything I know and have learned from talking with her is that my skill and knowledge isn’t enough.”

As he spoke, Max pulled out a core he had crafted like the one in Dexic’s sword.

“I could charge this with one of the crystals from the tower, but the difference in potential and magical power… or energy is immense. Jazzjak did me a favor and reached out, talking with others casually about who the best person for this job would be, and it appears we’re outside the shop that has been here the longest and had the best reputation.”

“And Rakonath is okay with this?” Batrire asked.

“When I mentioned it, he immediately volunteered,” he replied with a sigh. “I didn’t want him to feel pressured, but he believes that if I think it’s worth doing, then we should try.”

“Another one committed to you,” Tanila stated as she winked at him. “Don’t worry… soon worlds will all sing the praises of your name.”

The others all laughed as he groaned and deactivated the bubble of silence.

Still chuckling, Cordellia moved to where the door was and grabbed the metal handle.

“OH MY GODS!”

Her scream made everyone react, a hammer appearing in Fowl’s hand as she tried to pull away from the door but couldn’t.

Max started to laugh, and the others joined in after they noticed the handle had turned into a hand. It grasped hers and kept Cordellia locked in place.

“Get it off! Get it off!”

Tell her to open the door all the way.

“Why don’t you shut the door or open it all the way?” Max asked as he moved to where she was dancing on the sidewalk, getting a few reactions from those who passed by.

Quickly, their ranger pulled the door till it stopped, and the metal hand vanished, and the silver handle returned to normal.

Laughter came from inside, and Max didn’t wait, moving past the elf whose cheeks were bright red.

Inside, lights of all different colors were moving around the ceiling, some swirling like the planets and stars that Bob had shown him a few times in his dreams.

“Welcome! A new visitor it seems!”

All over the shop were boxes and small mechanical contraptions, lifting and moving items and taking them to shelves that lined the walls.

At the counter, the one who had greeted them was a gnome, her brown hair tied back and mechanical glasses that adjusted as she stared at them.

Max could see a metallic frame running along her shoulders and arms and down to her hands, where three fingers each were covered in some kind of metal glove, different tips on the end of each one.

“Uh… Nimyn Flukepitch?”

“The one and only,” she replied with a grin. “Now tell me, why does a walking joke enter my place, even if one of them happens to be the champion of our fine city?”

Her smile was infectious, and Max moved quickly to the counter, sensing the rest of his party following him.

“Word has reached me you’re the best one to talk to when it comes to power cores. Is that true?”

She nodded and lifted her hand, lifting the pair of goggles which covered her blue eyes.

“I know there’s another one in this city who claims to be good with them, but if you’re looking for the highest quality and strength, I’m the one to seek out,” Nimyn declared. “Still, what I offer is a bit of a rare thing for many. Those who stop by here are often travelers, not the ones responsible for keeping our city from being overrun by petty champions looking to make a name for themselves.”

… “Do you know anything about dragon cores?”

Coughing once, the gnome blinked a few times and then slowly bobbed her head.

“I’m… aware of them and how desired they are. Perhaps you’re coming here to try and sell one? One you took off, Igarra?” she asked, her eyes almost twitching as she waited for an answer.

“That would be too easy,” Max replied, turning to see Fowl following a pair of the robotic helpers moving around the shop. “Don’t break it, we can’t afford it!”

“He’s right! You’d have to either pay for fixing them or be my lackey until you earned off how much it costs.”

Immediately, their warrior stepped back from the tiny clockworks that moved as if he wasn’t there, each with a metal box filled with random parts.

“Now then,” Nimyn said, “what do you want one for?”

“It’s more of an information-gathering moment. If someone had a dragon core, could they turn it into a stable power core for use in something like a weapon or armor?”

She chewed her lip and shook her head back and forth, drumming three metal-tipped fingers against the stone counter.

“Yes… but what you’re talking about doing isn’t easy and requires a specific skill just to make the power core. After that, you’d have to find another crafter who would be willing to work with said weaponsmith or armorsmith to create such a thing. If you could find two people with a skill required for that and use one… it could be a wonderful thing. The potential item would be… powerful.”

He could see the excitement in her eyes and the way she fidgeted as she stood.

“What kind of weapon would be best suited for something like that?”

“Hypothetically?”

Max nodded.

She brought both hands before her mouth and tapped her fingers together several times.

“One would need something with some weight and mass. A gun of some kind would be a wonderful thing, but good luck finding a crafter who knows how to make those here. The people of this world don’t seem to want to upgrade their technology that far. Of course I understand keeping those things in working order isn’t easy or cheap.

“Don’t think I’m stalking you, but a wise gnome keeps tabs on the current leader of the world they live on. I know you have been to Buwingrid, and she can’t even create firearms. On this world, there is one in the city but his stuff is… ehh, let’s just say not worth the coin or the waste of materials. I know a few on other worlds, but you’d have to travel there, and doing so might cause problems with their current world champion unless you sent a message beforehand and got approval.”

Max felt the other four move to the counter, each leaning against it as Nimyn continued spouting out whatever came to her mind.

Her eyes fell on him, and she paused for a second.

“Part of me wants to know if those two dragons you brought offer sharing their cores. Lots of tokens to be earned that way, and you could easily create a few dozen power cores from one. Then again, most dragons aren’t willing to let them be handled by anyone for obvious reasons.”

“You still haven’t given me the answer I’m looking for,” Max stated.

“That’s because there isn’t an easy answer,” she replied, throwing both hands up. “The truth is whatever you make from an item with a core like that would be… unique. You’d have to plan the weapon around it. Are you hoping to add a specific skill to the weapon or simply want to have it discharge part of its power as damage?”

“Perhaps both.”

Sighing, the gnome scratched her head.

“Both could be done… it would require a high-quality power core. So, I’ll ask the question I want answered before we continue this dance. Why are you specifically here in my shop, asking me very specific questions about something most would never know to ask?”

Grinning, Max raised his eyebrows a few times.

“Because I have access to a core, and if you’re willing to let me stand guard and watch as you work with it to create what I want, I can provide you with what I understand is the chance of a lifetime.”

A high-pitched squeal came from Nimyn as she leaned over the counter and drew close to Max.

“You’re serious! You would… let me create something from one!?”

Taking a small step back, he nodded slowly.

“Understand I won’t let it out of my sight, and after you’re done, I’ll pay the price we agree upon and take both the dragon and power core with me.”

A small frown appeared as she huffed.

“What if I wanted a second power core as payment?”

Thoughts?

We both know that such a thing is needed for the weapon you want to create. If you’ll have any chance of doing so, you’ll need to be willing to barter. Aerthen told you there would be plenty of power for two cores, already knowing that whoever crafted one for you wouldn’t do so simply for tokens or other items.

“That would work,” Max said, holding up a hand as the gnome started to speak. “Just remember, I won’t let you handle the core more than necessary. It’s more valuable to me than you know and nothing will keep me from returning it to my friend.”

Nodding once, the gnome spat in her hand and held it out.

“I accept those terms then.”

Smiling, Max repeated the gesture, ignoring the wet sensation against his skin.

“I’ll return soon.”

Laughing, Nimyn turned around, dancing as she did.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Links

//[2025-04-24 15:03]

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/112825/the-phoenix-cultivation-reincarnation-tower-climber

[L2]

[L3]

21-2/429-2(1) Book 9 - Finished! 1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2227589/book-9-finished;21-2/421-2(1[Waybak_First2025-04-28 9:46],[Fav2025-04-28 9:47],[word2025-04-28 10:05],[publish2025-04-24 17:37],[Last_edit2025-04-24 17:37]) Book 9 - Finished! - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road

Unfortunately, the title isn't enough. Now I have to type more words before I can post this.

Regardless - I finished writing book 9 and am waiting on a little more feedback from my beta team. So far everything has been well received (except for the cliff in the epilogue for the next arc).

Of course that means I have 6-9 books planned for what comes after book 9. Now you just have to wait for me to write it :)

I appreciate you all supporting me! Thank you again for staying with this story as long as you have. I'll keep updating as new stuff is worked on :)

22/430(1) Chapter 430 - Managing a World 1)

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2229935/chapter-430-managing-a-world;22/430(1[Waybak_First2025-04-28 9:47],[Fav2025-04-28 9:47],[word2025-04-28 10:50],[publish2025-04-25 15:00],[Last_edit2025-04-25 15:00])Chapter 430 - Managing a World - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 430 - Managing a World

“I still can’t believe that gnome was real or that she’s going to allow you to watch her work,” Fowl stated as they walked down the street. “I mean… gnomes are… rare… like how many exist in our world?”

“A few hundred?” Batrire answered. “Most don’t socialize anymore.”

“Why is that,” Cordellia asked. “I mean… I heard rumors but did they really create automatons that attacked others?”

Their healer simply shrugged in response.

“Tanila might know better, but that’s the rumor. Some felt their creations needed souls, and whatever they did didn’t work out. In the last four thousand years, the number of gnomes has decreased, and the few around are pretty crotchety. Also, they’re known for being a bit of a trickster and very guarded of their craft.”

“Says a dwarf,” their mage teased. “Still, I think you’re right. All I ever heard about them was that they love trying to create things more than life itself. A few are employed in our kingdom, and I met a couple as a child. Both were extremely old and yet excited at whatever materials my father gave them. Beyond that, I don’t remember much about them or even seeing them again.”

Max said nothing as he walked beside the woman he loved, holding her hand and considering his next move.

So we go back to the tower and see what comes from it. We continue to collect whatever might be useful and prepare to leave in two weeks.

That is about the most time I would spend here. Quilazmore believes he’ll have the rings you requested within that time frame. He wasn’t happy to learn you had given away that corpse.

Sog’thollech needed it more. Besides, I want to see how he does in a few days. You and I both know he must be back into fighting shape if we’ll have him when needed.

I can only imagine how he felt after losing so much power. Can you fathom what it would be like to see your stats reduced by one-half or two-thirds in a moment?

Sensing Tanila looking at him, Max turned and smiled at her.

“I heard you. No, I’m not crazy for wanting to watch her work. Part of it is because I want to see how it is done. The other part is because I won’t simply hand a dragon core to someone I barely know and trust them to not use it.”

“It appears you’re getting wiser. Now all I need to do find a way to make you dress nicer. Surely, you don’t always have to wear your armor.”

Max glanced down at his outfit. He had become so accustomed to wearing it that he had forgotten it was on most of the time.

“Protection… that’s why you have everything but your staff out. Fowl’s the only one who doesn’t have to wear everything, as no one will attack the shortest one in our group.”

“Bah, go hump a troll!” their warrior shouted. “It’s because they know I’m probably the strongest and thus don’t need to wear any armor.”

“Oh, I’m certain that’s what it is, my love,” Batrire teased.

Laughing, they approached the tower, ready to see what it tossed at them next.

***

“What is this stuff?” Fowl asked as he flicked his weapon, orange goo stretching to the limit before flying free of the embrace it had on the metal.

Max shrugged, not suffering the same fate as their warrior after learning a sharp blade prevented most of the gel-like liquid from sticking.

“It’s a type of shapeshifter,” Tanila stated. “We all saw them transform. I guess that whatever this stuff is provides them the ability to shape their skin however they want.”

Cordellia made a dry heaving sound as she tried to wipe the gunk off her body.

“Swallow some, dear?”

Their ranger nodded, still spitting out the gunk that had splattered all over her.

“Who could imagine that those birds would dive at you like that or explode upon being killed.”

Shaking her hands, their ranger scowled at him for a moment. A large section of rocks covered in busted bodies had exploded upon impacting the grey, rocky floor she was standing on.

Well over two thousand busted corpses lay around and behind them in the pass they were in, some still sliding down the walls from where Max had sent them flying with spells or his hands.

Gone was the shape of all the attackers.

“There were goblins, ogres, elves, a giant, birds, some kind of dinosaur thing and even a pack of large bull-like creatures,” Fowl said as he banged his shield against the rocky floor. “It was like someone sounded a dinner bell, and they all came to eat.”

“This reminded me of the floor I faced a little bit,” Max stated as he stared down the enclosed pass. “A never-ending wave of monsters. Thankfully, these weren’t too strong.”

“You’re kidding? Right?”

Shaking his head at Cordellia, Max pointed at the largest corpses turning into orange sludge with a grey exterior skin that melted away.

“Imagine something twenty feet tall at least, in packs that never ended until something stronger came. That’s what it was like. And I was fighting non-stop for days. No rest or break unless my friend took over or the rare moment Sog’thollech helped.”

She spit out the water she had swished around in her mouth.

“But did you swallow any of them?”

Laughing, Max shook his head.

“No, I learned long ago to keep my mouth closed when fighting.”

***

“Word has traveled that you five are already past the fourteenth floor,” Jazzjak said as he waited for Max to review the reports. “Many are signing up to give the tower another attempt, and this time it appears your advice of grouping up is setting in. Most now go in at least a pack of four if not five. I even heard of two groups of five going in together to help cover each other as they fight.”

“Don’t be too surprised,” Everett chimed in. “You’ll get tired of being constantly caught off guard by what he and the others are accomplishing. If I had a gold coin for each time he returned and told me how they overcame some impossible floor or boss, I’d have at least fifty of them now.”

Max set down his tablet and shook his head at both men.

“You talk like I’m not here. Besides, you already earned far more gold from everything we accomplished. And if I remember, you’re the one who was anxious to see us pass the 50th floor.”

“Oh, I’m not complaining, just giving our little friend here some advice about what you’re capable of.”

A grunt came from the vorpal rabbit, who glared at the Faction leader.

“I would request you don’t mention my size. Trust me, it’s one of the few things that upsets me.”

“Ahh, forgive me,” Everett replied. “I meant no disrespect. I wasn’t sure how to describe you best with a term of endearment.”

Jazzjak’s nose twitched as his red eyes shifted from the older man to Max.

“Does he really care about me? If so, why would he call me small?”

“You’ve heard how Fowl and I as well as the others all talk to each other?
Bobbing his head so fast both ears seemed to dance, the rabbit affirmed that he had.

“We tease and talk about each other because we care for one another. It’s just how we are. He mentions that I’m bald, and I talk about how he is short. All of us comment on Cordellia’s voice…”

A slight chuckle came from Jazzjak, who then returned his gaze to Everett.

“So then I would comment on how old or grey your hair is?”

Laughing, the Faction leader nodded.

“Most do… most do. But still, I will try to find something else to tease you about that you cannot fix. Are there other things one shouldn’t mention?”

“My ears or my nose are best not spoken of. Most of my kind do not appreciate any comments about those two things.”

“Got it… no mentioning your nose or ears… what about your soft fur?”

“Of course, it’s soft. Why wouldn’t it be?” Jazzjak asked, cocking his head slightly.

Max and Everett started to laugh and then began to cry as the vorpal rabbit sat there, unsure what he didn’t understand.

“In… our world… rabbits are known… for being cute,” the Faction leader said between breaths. “So soft fur is kind of a way of saying you're cuddly and cute.”

Two large teeth appeared, and a slight hiss came from Jazzjak.

“Perhaps we should just agree not to show our affection for each other.”

The older man froze, glancing at Max, who had stopped laughing immediately after seeing the rabbit’s demeanor change so quickly.

“I… forgive me, I didn’t mean to–”

Jazzjak started to giggle and laugh, his nose moving so fast it was hard to track and both ears flopped around as the rabbit wiggled in his seat.

“Oh… your face! I was joking! You can talk about my fur being soft.”

A forced chuckle came from Everett, who Max could see looking very relieved to find out he hadn’t started some planetary crisis.

***

“It would appear both of you have this in hand,” Max stated as he slid the tablet back to Jazzjak. “What is your opinion of having those other twelve helpers, each one managing a section of this city, along with three for each ring outside the center?”

“It is unlike anything ever suggested before is an understatement, but your old friend’s stories have shown me what I already know. There is not enough time or desire for me to run everything. Also, having those numbers makes it easier to keep too much corruption from spreading and provides enough support if one needs help.”

“And you already have most of the people in mind for these positions?”

Jazzjak nodded and leaned back in the chair.

“Only about five spots out of all those will still need someone I’m not certain of. Everett also mentioned ensuring that you meet with each of them before you leave

and give them a personal charge. That alone should motivate them to follow the task they will be given."

"You and I both know how much every member in the faction immediately tried harder after a little bit of time spent with you," Everett stated. "Based on their culture and respect of power, it should do the same here."

Nodding, Max stood and slapped the table.

"Alright, then I'm off to see about a few other errands. Make sure Quilazmore gets me a list of what I asked for and to have that book sooner than later for me. Also, tell your wife I'm looking forward to dinner with you all in a few days."

The vorpal rabbit leaped off his chair and quickly moved to where Max was. He held out his hand and then quickly pumped it up and down multiple times before letting go.

"You have no idea how excited she is about this moment."

"Based on how you're acting, I can guess."

***

"Are you certain you can trust this gnome?" Aerthen asked. "For Rakonath, this will be the first time he has attempted to expel the core. Know that it will be far worse than it was for me, and he will feel its loss immediately."

"I will be fine," the silver dragon quickly interjected. "You and I both know that I must help Max in any way possible, and I trust him with my life. As such, I trust him with my core."

The red dragon's lip furled slightly, the softest growl coming for a moment as she stared at the growing dragon who seemed to forget just how much larger she was.

Max couldn't help but smile, seeing the pair lounging on a bed of orange grass that had been grown for the pair near his *home* , letting the sun bake the pair as they relaxed in their natural form.

"I promise you, I won't let it out of my sight, and I understand the risk this involves."

Snorting, she nodded and then lay still on the grass.

"Then begin. We shall see how long it takes for you to bring it up."

A grin appeared on Rakonath's face as he moved a little bit away from the two and turned, stretching his neck out.

Retching sounds came and after a minute, chunks of partially dissolved flesh and bones spewed forth from the younger dragon's mouth, landing on the grass, immediately emanating a stench that was one of the worst Max had ever smelled.

"Eat it! Quickly!"

Rakonath stood there for a few seconds, staring at the pile he had just created, before bending his neck and using his tongue to lap up the bubbling mess.

Max covered his mouth as he watched, not wanting to witness what was before him but unable to look away.

Links

//[2025-04-28 10:50]

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/113794/system-psion

23/431 Chapter 431 - Dragon Core 1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2232805/chapter-431-dragon-core;23/431(1[Waybak_first2025-04-28 9:47],[Fav2025-04-28 9:47],[word2025-04-28 11:03],[publish2025-04-26 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-26 15:02])Chapter 431 - Dragon Core - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road

Chapter 431 - Dragon Core

“You actually have one,” Nimyn muttered as she held the dragon core that was almost twelve inches in diameter in her hands. “I’m *actually* holding one…”

Max smiled and said nothing else as he stood beside her for a few more seconds.

“So you can do it?”

“You bet your swinging pair I can! Now, all I need to do is set up my shop, and we can start the process!”

Her hands shook as the glowing orb was given back to him, eyes seemingly unable to be torn away until she took a quick breath and hopped down off the stone platform behind her counter.

“Big H and GD! Flip the sign and lock the door! Momma’s going to be cooking tonight!”

Two of the clockworks suddenly stopped their movements, set down the boxes they were carrying and moved toward the door, ready to carry out the instructions they had been given.

***

Max watched in wonder at what he was about to witness, keeping his eyes focused on Nimyn's work.

For over three hours, she had built a custom power core, showing him how to enforce it with a metallic cage and different *parts* he could create if he acquired some other

skills to help improve power flow between the core and whatever item it was finally inserted in.

So that Robotics skill you consumed…

Yeah… yeah… looking back now, I can see how it might have been useful. Still, you could probably travel to her world and try to acquire the tinkering, engineering, and other half-dozen skills she mentioned it took to build creations like the ones in her shop.

Or kill her and take them…

Yes… or that…

Their bond sparked a thread of sarcasm, and Max just smiled, knowing Bob had not been amused by his joke.

“Okay, now you’re going to really want to focus on this next part,” Nimyn said as she pointed at the core she had finished constructing. “We’re going to transfer the power from what you have to this, but we must take it slow and steady. If you rush it, even as much work as I’ve done to re-enforce this one, you could overload it and … boom!”

She waved both hands in the air, wiggling her metal-covered fingers as she grinned.

“We don’t want to do that, okay?”

Nodding, Max cracked his neck.

“So what’s next?” he asked.

“I’ll need to use a transfer case and cable. Are you willing to let me handle the dragon core so I can find the best case for its size? I know you’re protective of it, but it has to be a perfect fit.”

Retrieving it from storage, Max handed it to her, watching as she took it and jumped off her stone platform.

“Okay, now grab those two cables I laid out at the end of the table and clip them on the connecters we attached to the orb while I start sizing cases,” Nimyn said as she moved to a wall lined with metal boxes, each with runes etched all over them.

Moving to the cables at the end of the counter, Max found the clips on them and took them back, sensing the direction he needed to adhere them to the new core.

I guess we’ll need to buy some of these cases or just pay her each time to do this?

How many more of these do you want? We still don’t know how much–

“This one should do it!” Nimyn shouted as she turned, holding out a gold and crystal case, the glowing orb showing through the box. “You can’t imagine how excited I am.”

“Me either,” Max replied, grinning as she was. “I’ll need to–”

The box disappeared, and he saw her grin change.

“Nimyn, I thought you understood my instructions about the core.”

She nodded and shrugged as she moved her hand over her wrist.

“Be safe, Max.”

Hearing his name from her, knowing she had never been told any name, but Ifrit, made his blood go cold. Before he could react, Max felt a tear in the fabric around him.

[System Travel - Block - Overridden]

A gigantic force struck him as the very space around him began to compress. The last thing he saw was the gnome slapping her wrist. Just before she struck it, a small flashing yellow button appeared.

She’s–

His body was torn into pieces. Every inch of matter almost disintegrated into nothingness.

Pain that was beyond anything else that ate at his very existence was there for a moment and then gone as he was washed away.

[Negate Death Blow - Activated]

The absence of sound was the first thing Max noticed.

His radar didn’t detect anything.

It’s gone… everything around us is gone…

Max’s eyes worked, and he felt himself floating.

What… she… tricked me?

It would appear so… now I wish you hadn’t been joking.

Max’s eyes struggled to see what it was he saw.

Around him was a perfectly spherical crater, half in the ground, the other half missing.

Every building within that circle, which ran for almost a hundred and fifty yards, was also gone. Some of the buildings on the outer edge of the circle were perfectly cut in shape.

Then, the wailing started.

Sounds of pain, agony, and worse came as the realization of whatever had just happened set into those around.

Different beings looked down from cut buildings, some missing a limb, all responding to what had gone off in the city.

You need to go, now.

But these people… I need to –

We… you cannot help them. Right now, you need to do something else. You made a promise, and I know you. It's time for you to go hunting.

***

Jazzjak slammed his furry fist into the table, his foot tapping the floor so fast the sound almost drove Max crazy, but he knew the rabbit was working as fast as possible.

"A weapon like that… here," Quilazmore muttered. "Even that could have killed Igarra… those… are outlawed. For Nimyn to have had one… she would have to smuggle it in piece by piece."

Tanila's grip on his arm was causing her fingers to turn white, and he tried to calm her down with a gentle touch.

"You're going to go… aren't you?"

"I made a promise… I have, too. What she took…"

A nod was all the love of his life gave, a single tear rolling down her cheek.

"I warned you about this!" Aerthen shouted, pacing the room in her humanoid form. "Do you understand what you have done to him!? So much growth! Gone!"

"Stop it!" Rakonath yelled. "It was my choice. He is not to blame."

The red dragon spun on her heels and came to where the silver dragon was scrunched up in the corner of the room.

"No, you do not understand! It will take time for you to start growing a new one. That will cause this dramatic growth you have been experiencing to come to a halt, and you may never recover from it. If you cannot retrieve that in the next few days, we're looking at a loss of months, maybe a year in your growth! Unlike me, mine sustains me and keeps me from dying if I'm hurt. Yours… it is everything to you at this stage. Your body must adapt to a new one, and what that one had… cannot be easily replaced."

Inside his chest, Max felt a weight that seemed to crush him.

You didn't know. I didn't even sense anything. She played us, and we fell into the trap. No doubt she believes you are dead. We'll use that to find her and extract justice.

"Max, please stop."
Tanila's voice was higher than usual, and he glanced down, seeing that he was squeezing her hands. He saw the look on her face.

"I… I'm sorry, I didn't—"
"It's okay. Batrire, can I get a small heal?"

A green glow came as their healer obliged their mage's request, two fingers bent in the wrong direction, returning to normal.

“Don’t,” Tanila said as she held up a hand, cutting him off. “You didn’t know, and you’re right to be angry. I wish I could go with you, but we all know this isn’t the time or place for such a thing. Go… show her and anyone else who thinks they can attempt such a thing that you will make them pay tenfold.”

Her gaze was steady, but those green eyes seemed to be on fire, and a sensation of rage almost rolled off the woman he loved.

“Don’t worry, I will.”

Each minute felt like an eternity, and Quilazmore occasionally said something, making Jazzjak grunt as the pair worked on a terminal inside the teleportation area.

I wanted to learn more about this place, and here I am… about to find out how it works.

We need to focus. Time is crucial, and you will be on a world that’s not your own. Tell me, how do you intend to handle this problem?

I’m going to turn her entire world against her.

Laughter came from inside his head; unlike so many times, he wasn’t disturbed by it. Instead, it seemed to make him feel at ease.

You will learn the greatest lesson that can only be gained by doing. Show them all who you really are.

***

“Okay, this will take you to the world she went to,” Jazzjak said, handing Max the tablet he had been holding. “That’s all that I know about the world, but it’s mainly a gnomish, dwarf, and goblin one, from what our report says. I can get you to the main teleporter in the capital city. They won’t expect you, so you may be required to clear some customs.”

Forcing his rage to rise, Max took a deep breath and slowly let it out.

“What will that involve?”

Five green tokens and a metallic card appeared in Quilazmore’s outstretched hand.

“There is a fee and some paperwork. All the information is on this card. Once you’ve cleared the transportation area, you should be free to explore the city. As far as finding out where Nimyn is at… I can’t give you any advice on it.”

“Whose in charge of that planet?”

“LYC-58252 has a delegation that handles all problems… not a singular person like yourself,” Jazzjak replied. “From what I understand, each race submits five who will be responsible for their section of the world and potential problems that arise

between them. You should be able to find someone who can direct you or provide a map.”

“What about power level compared to here? Say Igarra or myself?”

Both men glanced at each other, and neither hid the pained look they wore.

“That isn’t an answer I can give,” Quilazmore said. “They’re an older world with a rich history of embracing the art of mechanical things. Unlike here, they focus on augmenting their bodies with equipment and machinery. It’s a weird combination of magic and technology, but it has done well for them.

“So anything you encounter strength-wise would be a mix-mash of organic and metal. How that stacks up against you… I’m not certain.”

“If you had to guess?” Max asked, trying to get them to give him a better answer.

“They most likely have multiple fighters who could potentially be as strong as you or stronger,” Jazzjak said with a sigh. “We don’t have time to do proper research. If you wanted to give me a day I could–”

“No. I don’t have that kind of time. I’ll go in and see what I can figure out. Just keep them safe for now, and I’ll be back as quickly as possible.”

Moving to where Tanila was, he pulled her close and kissed her.

“Forgive me.”

“You don’t have to apologize. No one blames you. That’s a job you seem to be very good at doing alone.”

Moving to where Rakonath was, he held out his hand and scratched the underside of the silver dragon’s jaw.

“I made a promise, and I will keep it.”

“Of that, there is no doubt. Teach them what it means to mess with you. And bring me back something to eat.”

Even as the portal activated, and he felt the world shifting before his eyes, Max couldn’t stop laughing, the thrumming of his dragon and Aerthen vibrating the room.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Links

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24/432(1) Chapter 432 - A New World [1)]

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2235021/chapter-432-a-new-world;24/432(1[Waybak_First2025-04-28 9:47],[Fav2025-04-28 9:47],[word2025-04-28 11:22],[publish2025-04-27 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-27 15:02])Chapter 432 - A New World - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road

Chapter 432 - A New World

[Planetary Travel Successful]

[Entity does not match specific travel protocol]

[…]

[…]

[Entity possesses World Champion Title]

[Planetary Travel Granted]

Blinking, Max was distracted by the messages that scrolled past and the area surrounding him.

Eight distinct automatons surrounded the platform he was on, different colored gems for their eyes, all fixed upon him.

Behind them were metal walls filled with display panels, and a few small gnomes, dwarves, and goblins stood off in different areas, each wearing matching suits and talking with others.

“Get off the platform you oaf!”

The high-pitched yet gruff voice carried across the din of noise from the metal room, and Max saw a bald gnome with a large pair of spectacles leaning over a metal panel like the one Jazzjak had used.

“What?”

“I said, get off the fricking platform so someone else can come here without us having to worry about the two of you finding yourself merged into a new creation! Even if it’s probably a better-looking one!”

Some chuckles came from a pair of dwarves who stood on either side of the spot where the gnome was, each wearing a weird, tight suit with a metal frame running along it like seams.

Without waiting, he moved down the stairs and toward the pair, who were holding their hands up to stop him.

“Paperwork? Reason for visit?”

The dwarf who spoke to him had tri-colored hair: orange, green, and white, each section braided independently of the others.

“To explore and have fun.”

A grunt came and the stubby hands snatched the card Max held out.

He put it against a tablet and then both eyes went wide, glancing at the screen and then back up at him.

“Uh… can you give me one moment? Forgive me, sir. My partner and transport operator didn’t realize we would have someone of your reputation coming today.”

“What are you squawking about?” the gnome asked as he adjusted his glasses. “Who the fook is this bald human?”

“Shut it, Marty! He’s a WC!”

Choking noises came as the Gnome leaned back, and then he disappeared, falling off whatever stand he had been, the sound of his body striking the floor.

The other dwarf with only orange and green hair, quickly moved around the panel area.

“He’s fine, Fipple. Doesn’t even have a bump on his ugly head.”

A slight sigh came from the dwarf who still held Max’s card, softly tapping it against a tablet.

“I’ve sent in a request sir, for an escort. They should be here shortly, and if you don’t mind, I can accompany you to a better waiting area as they finish up the custom clearing process.”

“Fipple was it?”

The guard bobbed his head.

“Forgive me, I didn’t realize I would be causing a scene,” Max stated. “I didn’t give my people much time to announce that I was headed here.”

Clearing his throat, the dwarf shrugged and motioned to a door away from most of the other people in the room.

“You have nothing to apologize for, sir. Now, if you’ll give me a moment.”

Fipple moved quickly to where he could stick his head around the paneled spot.

“Marty, get your short arse up on that box and get back to work, or so help me I’m going to relegate you to the transportation of waste material again!”

A loud *ack* could be heard and the gnome’s head quickly appeared over the short wall, adjusting his glasses that were still slightly off-kilter.

“Now if you don’t mind. It’s this way.”

***

Max couldn’t help but smile as he ran his hand over the couch he was sitting on.

Three times, different robots, as Fipple had called them, came by offering a variety of food and drinks that they could prepare for him. Across the small waiting area, the dwarf stood like a statue, occasionally checking his tablet when it vibrated.

If I wasn’t in a rush to kill someone and get revenge, I could get accustomed to being treated like this.

Royalty, those of great power, and those who are feared often get special treatment. No doubt you have a combination of those in these people's eyes. Still… time is of the essence.

Can I use this role to get information without the need for killing or torture?

Potentially, but the problem may arise that you gave someone that reason. While some might not question it, when you specifically ask about a gnome in particular, you could find yourself either requested to leave or a warning could be given to that gnome. There is no telling what other traps or potential escape mechanisms they might have if they get that chance.

I could mention that we have a gnome on our world and play that card. Mention how she had spoken highly of her home. See if there are relatives. Start there?

Bob said nothing for a moment, but there was a sense of consideration to what he had just said that Max could almost make out.

Everything we do here will be the unknown. Some worlds might consider that a compliment and share information as a way to brag. Others might keep silent, not wanting to give out anything without first fact-checking.

Here, with three races and not knowing their relationships or how they view each other, we might encounter other issues that stem from that.

Clearing his throat, Max watched as Fipple flinched slightly.

“You said it should only be a few minutes, but it’s been longer. Is there a reason for the delay?”

The slightest twinge of angst washed over the dwarf’s bald face.

“Honestly, sir, you’re the first being ever to exit my portal with the rank that you possess. This is new to me, and I had expected a much faster response. Please understand I mean no disrespect. My tablet has informed me that your welcoming party is coming.”

“Party?”

Once more the dwarf flinched, obviously catching the disappointment in his tone.

“It would appear… that is the case. Again, I don’t have any real experience with… World Champions coming through the portal unannounced, and I’ve been in my position for well over a hundred years.”

“Do we have to wait here? I’d much rather start to explore the world I’ve heard so much about.”

Shifting side to side, Fipple pulled up his tablet and his stubby fingers began frantically tapping against it.

A few seconds passed and then he smiled.

“I was informed that if you do not mind me escorting you until your welcoming party arrives, I can show you some of the capital near here.”

Standing, Max gave the best grin he could and nodded.

“I would be happy to have you as my guide,” he said. “As one with a blood brother who is a dwarf, I cannot imagine a better escort.”

Both of his silver eyes widened, and the guard’s jaw dropped.

“You… have a blood brother?”

Nodding, Max moved to where the guard was and pointed at the door.

“Let’s go for a walk, and I’ll tell you my story if you tell me about the city.”

***

Holy elf tits… this place is unreal…

Not often do I like to agree with that statement, but you are correct.

Lights hanging over a wide street changed and noise erupted as bikes, mechanical horse-pulled carts, and wagons that his escort had called a *cruiser* raced down the street as the other sides stopped.

The smell of smoke appeared as goblins, dwarves, and gnomes all moved through the city.

Giant metal buildings, some stretching fifty floors high, hid the sun, which was already partially obscured by the haze of smoke above.

There were lights and noise everywhere, and the sidewalk they were standing on, which moved in the direction Fipple was taking him, had his sonar working like crazy to filter out noises that didn't matter.

"I still can't believe this is your first time in Din Buldar. Do World Champions not travel that much?"

"Occasionally I do," Max replied, watching as lights and displays flashed all around him. "But leaving one's world for a long time does leave it open to being challenged. I prefer to not have to keep killing those foolish enough to try."

He could sense the dwarf swallowing whatever was coming next, his clean-shaven throat unable to hide the movement.

A trio of goblins, each with orange skin and beards that almost touched the moving walkway, hurried past them, talking about the latest gizmo that they all needed.

Some dwarves had beards, and others didn't. The variety of clothing options on display often made him want to chuckle.

"Tell me, what is up with all the attire I see and the different gears and other stuff on them?"

"Oh steampunk or gaslamp has been the rage for eons. Those who are rich can afford the real items while many wear knockoffs which do nothing. My outfit, for example," Fipple said as he tapped the metal that ran the edge of one of his arms and up his shoulder. "It is part of the gaslamp tech, and it provides me with protection and strength if I were to need it. Obviously, I don't use it unless I had to as any unauthorized use of it would result in my pay being docked to fix or charge it."

Nodding, Max listened, intrigued by what the dwarf was explaining.

"Do all the races create this or?"

"Gumbodo no!" his escort stated as he waved a hand. "Each race has their own version and few have tried to meld them together, but often that has resulted in catastrophic disaster. Only the true bloods of the way can access that; those few only teach their own blood."

"So some still exist?"

Tsking his tongue, Fipple nodded, his finger rising as he pointed at a cruiser that was stopped at a corner that had no top.

"That goblin's hat, the one right there. Can you see it?"

Shaped like a top hat, Max could see that it had gears moving and two lights that glowed softly. What looked like possible designs or runes along the hat almost called out to him.

"If that is real, then I could work for the rest of my life and never be able to afford it. That is the power of a true item. For him to wear it openly like that means a few things."

“He’s strong, connected, rich, or simply pretending to be.”

Fipple laughed and nodded. “You nailed it.”

“So, who still makes those?” Max asked.

“Only half a dozen families or so for each race. The market is strong enough that when something of renown is crafted, auctions are held and everyone tunes in to see what someone will acquire.”

Tapping his chin, Max took a shot he hoped paid off.

“Yeah… the gnome on my world mentioned something about that once if I remember. Nimyn spoke about it. Nimyn Flukepitch.”

Fipple started to cough and beat his chest a few times.

“Did… did you say Flukepitch?”

Cocking his head, Max tried to keep his cool.

“I did… why?”

“That’s…” Coughing once more, the dwarf cleared his throat. “That is the name of one of the gnomish families who craft such things. I… I didn’t realize one of their blood had left the world.”

“Really?” Max asked, smiling as he put a hand on the dwarf he was almost ready to kiss. “Tell me, is their place anywhere near here? I’d love to try and tell them how much I appreciate their kin.”

“Yes… but… I’m not sure they’d allow you into their place,” Fipple said, motioning to Max to come closer as he whispered. “Some of the gnomes are downright evil and conniving, and that family is probably one of the worst. You would have to travel for at least a day by train to reach the city they are in, and then you’d have to reach their estate and ask for an audience.”

“Probably one of those overly gaudy places where they flaunt their money.”

Rolling his eyes Fipple nodded. “You have no idea.”

“Well perhaps I can get a chance later to try anyway,” Max said. “Which way is the city they are in?”

The dwarf pulled the tablet he had secured in a pouch on his hip and tapped it, pointing his arm almost directly behind him.

“It would be this way.”

“Well, one last question: where could I go to relieve myself? It’s been a while, and all this traveling has made me need to go.”

Fipple nodded and led him off the walkway that was still moving them through the city. He stepped off it and onto a large metal sidewalk with a giant flashing goblin face and a top hat.

He pointed at the green and purple building at its edge, rising into the sky and covered in signs that beckoned people to come in and sample different delicacies or try one of its other services.

“In here are a few. If I were you, I’d pay for the better bathroom. Trust me, these goblins can’t aim.”

Smiling, Max nodded and made his way toward the door.

“I’ll be back as quick as I can.”

The moment Fipple turned his back, Max made his move.

[Blink]

[Demonic Teleportation]

[Stealth]

A wind blade appeared under his feet, and Max couldn’t help but smile as Bob maneuvered the spell around the building and upward, rising high into the sky as they headed in the direction they had been directed.

How in the gods did you luck out and get one that dumb?

I’m not sure he was stupid… simply… awestruck by my awesomeness.

Yeah… that’s exactly what it was.

Both of them laughed as they streaked through the air, ready to try and find the quarry that needed to be taught a lesson.

25/433(1) Chapter 433 - A New Capital

Next Chapter: 2025-04-28 15:02 [2025-04-28 11:11] 1)
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2237660/chapter-433-a-new-capital;25/433(1[Waybak_First],[Fav2025-04-28 15:05],[word2025-04-28 15:02],[publish2025-04-28 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-28 15:02])Chapter 433 - A New Capital - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road
Chapter 433 - A New Capital

Max had noticed the tracks for the train that Fipple had mentioned would take him to the town they were headed toward.

Rough stone covered a large section of the land, hundreds of mines that had eaten away at the world. Each one turned into a deep chasm, cut in perfect lines.

I wonder how much has been mined from this area. For a world to be as old as Jazzjak and Quilazmore had said, I wonder where the food plots are. It also makes me curious to know how big this world must be compared to ours.

In my memory, I see worlds and planets that would make yours feel like a simple boulder at the base of a mountain. Just as this one appears to be comprised of mainly stone, others are water or ice. Some burn with fire as the sun that they are near bakes them nonstop.

And to think there are creatures that live on them...

Imagine if one of them came to your world. How would one from a planet so hot deal with the temperature you think is normal? Would their very body melt everything they stood upon or would they perish from the pain of freezing to death?

Bob's comments and questions helped Max to keep his rage in check as they streaked across the sky, watching the land beneath them never seem to change enough to gauge a real distance.

***

Large metal buildings once again rose up in various blocks, each set in a consistent pattern of squares, everything almost perfectly in place.

A few things he figured had to be some farms and livestock areas had been off to one side, but otherwise the city suddenly appeared on the landscape, an enormous mine miles away and sunken deep into the city with multiple tracks that ran to where it was and back to the city.

So their main part of this city must be that massive mine out there. It's like watching ants move even from way up here. So much smoke is rising from it.

For the city to be that big, it must provide a large portion of what is needed and required. I'd be interested to see what potential materials for crafting are available after we solve our initial problem.

Snorting as the wind raced over his bald head, Max studied the city as Bob began to lower them slowly toward the sprawling area.

Movement was everywhere, and lights blinked constantly. The sun was on what he assumed was the last third or less of light for the day, and the brightness of the lights below seemed to almost twinkle like stars from above.

Slowly, the city's composition and layout changed, and larger, less packed blocks began to appear in the center.

There it is!

Max knew immediately where the Flukepitch estate must be because the amount of space that was both open and yet fenced in stood out from above.

They appear to have…. nine city blocks worth of space. A large wall surrounds it, and all four main roads have gates. One of them appears to be more for guests, as no line of goods seems to be waiting outside of it.

He could see the line of metal wagons, or containers, as Fipple had called them, lined up along the wall, and occasionally, one would enter and move along the roads inside the massive complex.

Wealthy enough to have that kind of place, guards, influx of goods and what has to be crafting facilities of some kind based on the smoke that is coming from those three large buildings. The houses or personal property must be in the other fenced-in area.

A thread of agreement came from Bob as they hovered high in the air, looking down upon the section in the middle which was obviously the main house.

Rare trees and plants were inside the walled-in space and red foliage that had to be similar to grass covered a section where tiny groups of people tended to the purple, green, yellow and red trees and bushes scattered around the inside.

All that remains now is deciding how you want to announce yourself.

Max already had all of his armor on, and he was not concerned with appearing regal or businesslike.

Seeing the property beneath him caused his blood to boil. He wondered what kind of influence the Flukepitch must have and what he would have to do to retrieve the stolen item.

On it.

[All Skill Cooldowns Reset]

Thank you. I know you hate doing that.

Dislike… then again, what is the point of not preparing for the worst? We could use the ability on your equipment, but this is just as easy. Besides, part of me hopes we will easily replace what that cost.

Knowing he was about as ready to go as possible, Max considered what his sudden appearance would do.

How easily can we get there and use stealth? Nothing says ‘we’re in trouble’ than seeing someone suddenly appear before them.

Bob laughed, and they started to descend, moving toward the largest building within the inner complex.

Windows covered a dome section, and Max entered stealth as they approached.

Stepping off the wind blade, he glanced through the glass and saw a large room filled with over fifty different cases, each holding items that had a light shining under or around them to illuminate them. A bright orange carpet with black designs covered

the floor, and metal and wood shelves were intermingled around the sides of the room.

Hovering lights floated in the air and moved around slowly and steadily.

The glass is trapped, as you can tell.

Holding his hand out, his Trap Detection skill could sense an energy field.

That changes things… I can tell that we won't be able to use your skills to teleport through it. Perhaps your planetary travel one might… but if it fails, it will inform them of our presence.

I guess we'll need to find another way in then.

Moving along the metal roof, Max occasionally had to step sideways or jump slightly, avoiding areas he sensed a trap was set.

Arriving at the edge of the eight-story building, he glanced down and saw that workers were still moving in and around the residence.

His eyes fell upon a small enclosed wagon with a charger attached to the front with two gnomes overseeing a dozen advanced-looking clockwork automatons unloading it.

Over there. A door that some are bringing in supplies. It's probably the best option right now.

Dropping to the ground, Max's stealth never broke as Bob used their Wind magic to move them quietly.

Without waiting, they came to the ramp the clockworks were moving through, each a foot taller than him, much slimmer and compact than before. Their metallic legs moved more precisely than the swaying stride of the ones back in Nimyn's shop.

His speed made him fly past them, sneaking past the gnome worker who was looking at a tablet, having just looked at some writing on the metal crate being carried in.

The doorway led into a large warehouse where dozens of other creations were moving around, each tasked with a job that appeared to require organizing crates.

Half a dozen gnomes were busy, some shouting orders while a pair were comparing tablets. They all wore purple outfits that seemed to clash with everything.

Bright lights, shining metal floor, and rows and rows of shelves with crates filled the fifty-foot-long area at least twenty feet high.

Max's eyes swept the space and saw a door across the room that looked different from all the others. Unlike most, which were at least nine feet tall, this one was smaller, barely five feet tall, and had a crest of some kind on it.

Sometimes I forget how fast we move, even while stealthed.

One second, he was tucked away near the entrance, gathering information on the space he had infiltrated, and the next, he stood by the small door, holding his hand out, trying to sense any traps.

There's a lock of some kind… mechanical or similar to the ones back in that city we… I destroyed. Let me have a moment.

Moving his hand over a clear piece of crystal, Max could sense Bob doing something. After a few seconds, a click came, causing the door to swing open on its own.

His sonar told him no one was coming toward them and as the door moved open and into a hall barely six feet tall and had floating lights along the ceiling, Max moved from the warehouse section and quickly pulled the door behind him.

Immediately, the noise of all the working automatons was cut off and replaced by a few sounds he could detect much further down the hall.

Dropping stealth, he reactivated it as soon as he could, moving down the hall to where he knew it was taking him toward the heart of the large building.

Dozens of doors flew by as he passed them. None had marks of any kind and all were made from a blood red-colored wood that didn't clash too much with the green carpet under his feet.

These gnomes… what is it with these colors?

Perhaps the whole world is color-blind?

Chuckling to himself, Max reached the door at the end, pressing his ear against it. Upon hearing nothing, he slowly opened it a crack, letting his sonar reveal anything he could learn about it.

Movement was evident and the sound of metal on stone alerted him to an approaching automaton.

Green gems flared up as the creation pulled the door open and seemed to stare into the hallway that was a foot shorter than it stood.

Spotting a staircase across the room and beyond the metallic obstacle, Max made his move.

[Demonic Teleportation]

He was fifteen yards past the apparent guard, and his ability and eyes revealed a three-story opening with stairs that ran up one side of the large room and then around to another floor.

A pair of automatons were standing near a hallway he deduced had to be from another entrance, and a few more were dusting different objects set upon furniture crafted from the same redwood as the doors.

Black stone steps led upwards, and Max moved up them silently, skipping the second floor with exits on both sides and continuing to the third-floor landing.

Large paintings hung on the walls above the stairs, some looking so old that if he touched them, they might die. Each one was filled with gnomes that apparently didn’t know how to smile and wore various goggles, glasses and other metallic contraptions.

They all wore green and purple suits, with the same crest on the door that led him in.

Reaching the top he stopped, seeing a twelve-foot painting that confirmed he was in the right place.

Seven gnomes, four men and three women, were arranged next to each other, all dressed as fancy as the rest of the other pictures.

At the top row on the left was the gnome that had brought him here.

Sharp blue eyes seemed to stare at him from behind a pair of goggles.

I’m glad to know we’re in the right place.

How far are you willing to go to acquire what we’re seeking?

Bob’s question tugged at a place he had finally mastered.

A calmness was there, as was the rage of what had been done and the pain he had felt at being tricked and risking the development of Rakonath.

This building… this property… as much of this city as I have to, and even most of this world… I’ll burn it down until they bring her to us and beg to take that which she stole from me.

Then, let us begin.

26/433-1(1) Book 2 of Battle Through the Nine Realms Live (audio and ebook)

Next Chapter: 2025-04-29 15:02 [2025-04-28 15:08] 1)
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2239182/book-2-of-battle-through-the-nine-realms-live;26/433-1(1[Waybak_First2025-04-30 10:46],[Fav2025-04-30 10:46],[word2025-04-30 10:51],[publish2025-04-29 00:05],[Last_edit2025-04-29 00:05])Book 2 of Battle Through the Nine Realms Live (audio and ebook) - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Book 2 on Amazon (Audio and Ebook)[L1]

For those of you who didn't know, I also have a Viking series in the works. Book 1 & 2 is on Amazon and book 3 is back in production!

Vikings, Runic Magic, the nine realms... what could be better?

If you haven't checked it out, give it a quick look if you're willing! It's a different system I built with runes as magic and of course the norse gods.

Thanks again to all of you who support me and I can't remember if I mentioned it but I finished book 9 of UL1!!

Links

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[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/amazon/B0DXFV52KS

27/434(1) Chapter 434 - Breaking Things 1)

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2240711/chapter-434-breaking-things;**27/434(1[Waybak_First2025-04-30 10:46],[Fav2025-04-30 10:49],[word2025-04-30 10:57],[publish2025-04-29 15:02],[Last_edit2025-04-29 15:02])Chapter 434 - Breaking Things - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**
Chapter 434 - Breaking Things

It took a minute to find the path both of them felt was the right one. Max’s original decision had led him to a section with doors that turned out to be bedrooms, and after checking one and finding that no one was around, he quickly made for the other direction.

So, the double set of doors on the left or the right?

Based on the house layout from when we were in the sky, the left path should lead to further areas in the building. Somewhere, there has to be another set of doors we have missed or the next floors will have a different layout.

And I didn’t see stairs near the bedrooms.

Moving to the doorway, Max was thankful for stealth as a gnome had passed him when they entered this hallway.

Metal and stone busts were lined along the edge of the walls, with paintings and names etched into the metal plaques on the bottom of the frames.

He felt like he was in some sort of shrine to short people, as every face looked almost sinister, with eyes that narrowed and a frown upon each rendition of some gnome.

The double doors had a panel on the side, and after Bob had worked his magic, it began to open on its own, with no noise coming as it gently swung open.

Inside was a twenty-foot-tall ceiling stretched over a hundred yards from the doorway, the sound of hammering and other noise immediately exiting the room upon his entry.

Looking inside revealed there were over fifty gnomes all hunched over at workstations, doing different things to various objects on stone tables.

Automatons were waiting near most of them, taking the finished item after a gnome handed it to them, replacing the one they had just been working on with another that covered the station they were at.

That orange outfit is horrible...

Every gnome at those small stations was wearing a matching jumper, tools stuffed in pockets, and each one had goggles over their eyes, completely focused upon the task before them.

In the middle of the room sat a square area on a raised platform with two gnomes in orange and purple suits.

One would occasionally inspect something brought to them while the other was bent over and appeared to be writing something.

Over there is the place we need.

Max saw that thirty yards away on the left was a set of doors, and when a gnome hand came through one, holding it open, they saw stairs that appeared to go upward.

His steps were silent, and as he approached the door, Max felt a trickle of energy run through him.

What was–

A pink light began to flash, and a chirping sound suddenly rang out, causing everyone in the room to stop what they were doing.

Go!

The door was about to close shut, moving faster than it had been a moment before, and Max knew that there had to have been some trap or detection thing of some sort as his notification appeared.

[Stealth Detected - Breaking Stealth]

[Demonic Teleportation]

He appeared on the lowest step behind the door, hearing it bang behind him and the sound of slight chaos from the room as whatever he had tripped started to take effect.

Sensing the need to hurry, he raced up the steps, their circular design covering the height, in just a few short turns and stood before a metal door with a small flat hole set inside.

It appears I need to insert something.

Let me try.

Above the door, a pink light continued to flash and chirp, and Max held his hand out, knowing that their time to be stealthy was gone.

Seconds ticked past, each one feeling like forever and after about fifteen seconds, Bob's frustration told him what he assumed would be his answer.

I cannot get it to open. There is a different kind of barrier around this lock.

Don’t worry. I’ll use my other key.

He tried using his Stone and Metal Mastery to adjust the wall or the door, yet both resisted him. A surge of pain ran through him as he felt some field repelling his attempt.

I guess I’ll use the other option.

[Power Strike]

His boot connected with the door, and it flew inward, ripping stone and metal chunks from the section of the wall, revealing a flurry of activity where one of the older gnomes he recognized from the painting with Nimyn was pounding on some tablet at a desk they were sitting at in the middle of the room.

“What–? Stop them!”

The gnome’s shout sounded squeaky, and for a moment, Max's memory of the first time he had heard Cordellia speak played through his mind before he saw four automatons begin moving toward the doorway he was walking through.

Each of their arms extended, arcs of lighting-like energy covering the entire two-foot section.

Soon, a pair of devices extended from over their shoulders as gem-eyes turned green and fixated upon him.

Equipping his shield and new weapon, Max formed it into a large sword and didn’t wait for their attack, dashing toward them and swinging at the head of the closest.

Metal arms tried to raise in time, but his speed was far beyond the clockwork creation, soon slicing and dicing all four as only two of them had managed to send a bolt of energy from both guns that had appeared on their shoulders once.

He blocked both with ease and turned his attention to the older gnome shouting into a communication device.

“I NEED HELP! WE’RE UNDER ATTACK!”

Both of the older gnomes' blue eyes glanced at the metal creations, seeing their hacked remains arcing and twitching on the floor as Max stored his shield and weapon and approached him.

“Who are you?! Why are you here?!”

Waiting for a reply, Max continued to move toward the older gnome, taking his time as his prey began to push back in his chair. A short version of some kind of gun pointed at him.

“Do that, and I promise I’ll take your hand.”

Sneering, the gnome pulled the trigger, erupting a thick, bright light from the barrel. Max held his left arm up, blocking the attack.

Pain came and the burning sensation from it let him know that it had been a wise move to try and block it.

That was not pleasant.

[Regeneration]

Grunting, Max looked at his arm, watching the flesh regrow as the inch-thick hole that had burned through half his forearm began to heal.

“Wha… you…”

He made his move, twenty yards gone in a moment, his new weapon coming down and cutting the outstretched hand and weapon off before the gnome could blink.

Blood began to spurt and Max summoned fire as he grabbed the outstretched arm before it could be pulled back, pressing the flames against the stump.

Screams came and the smell of burning flesh filled his nostrils as the older gnome writed in agony, no longer concerned about his appearance.

When he was certain that the man wouldn’t bleed out, Max lifted him upward, his face near his captive and growled.

“I told you I would take it. Let that be a warning. If I say I’m going to do something, I won’t hesitate, and you will find that if I need to, I’ll do the same for every one of your appendages.

“You fool! Do you know who I am?! I’m Gazbnar Fluepitch! You just signed your death papers! To attack me is to–”

Max backhanded the gnome, ensuring that he didn’t kill him, but he was still not certain how tough the man might be.

Blood and a few teeth flew from the strike, cutting off Gazbnar's words and causing his eyes to blink a half dozen times.

"You dare stri–"

Max hit him again, this time in the stomach, still holding the gnome by his stump.

Coughs came and a little bit of heaving as well.

"Stop with the threats. You're nothing compared to me, and I'm certain you're smart enough to have figured that out already. So, if you want to avoid as much pain as possible, you'll listen and do what I say. Otherwise…"

He raised the back of his hand again, watching as Gazbnar flinched.

"What… what do you want?"

"Nimyn… where is she?"

He could feel the heart of the gnome racing. Only a slight flinch came at the mention of her name.

"Offworld, doing work elsewhere."

His hand struck Gazbnar again, more blood coming from the split lips.

"Wrong answer. She's here, and we both know it. Where is she?"

"She… isn't…"

As he spoke between what appeared to be pained movements of his jaw, the crashing sound of something outside got Max's attention, and he carried the gnome still as he moved to a window that looked outside.

"Oh.. you're in trouble now…"

A slight cackle and cough came from Gazbnar, and he ignored the temptation to strike the gnome again, choosing instead to look at what had caused the noise.

Three large creations were outside with dozens of mounted guns on each. Beneath them were craters where they had fallen from the sky.

Those look… fun. Think there are gnomes inside, or are those just automatons?

Based on their appearance, I'm guessing they are manned. Look at the same eye section. It's similar to the one we faced on that tower floor.

More noise came, muted this time, and Max assumed that a few others had appeared elsewhere on the property.

Summoning his dimensional storage, the door swung open and Max held Gazbnar near it, watching the gnome struggle against his hold, eyes flickering between the space and his captor.

"Who… who are you?"

“I’m the one Nimyn stole something from, and I’ve come to collect… it would appear you’ve just ordered the death of others based on your actions in calling for help. So, in the meantime, I’m going to put you in here.”

“But if you die?!”

Laughing, Max flung the gnome inside and watched as he bounced a few times off the purple stone floor, struggling to rise and ran to where the doorway was, face planting against the invisible barrier.

“It would appear you know what that is and that if I die… well, you’ll only have a few days of air before you die as well.”

Still laughing, he willed the door shut, ignoring the cries of the gnome whose hand was still holding a gun, lying on the floor in the middle of the room.

I guess we should go outside and make sure we let them know I’m not playing.

That would be the polite thing. Especially since I can only assume they spent a great deal of energy getting here.

Using his weapon, Max shattered the window and leapt outside, landing on the red grass, wondering just how much damage he was about to cause to this property.

“Halt!”

All three of the twenty-foot metal creations before him trained their weapons on him.

Shields began to form outward from a hand on each, creating a circular defense while two had a large hammer form in their other and one had a sword.

“And if I don’t?” Max asked as he casually walked toward the closest one.

Every gun on his foe began to have different colored lights form across the barrels of them, a slight whine sounding as he sensed the build-up of energy being prepared to come at him.

I guess they answered that question.

Max tried to remember when Bob had laughed so much and for so long.

Yet as the first attack from his opponents came, he found himself laughing too.

He was tired of not being respected or people listening to him.

Today, he was going to make sure word of how he treated those who thought they could hurt him or his loved ones reached as many worlds as possible.

28/435(1) Chapter 435 - Gnomes... Gnomes... Gnomes...

Next Chapter:

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1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2243455/chapter-435-gnomes-gnomes-gnomes;**28/435(1[this.Waybak_First2025-04-30 15:24],[Fav2025-04-30 15:23],[word2025-04-30 15:25],[publish2025-04-30 15:02], [Last_edit2025-04-30 15:02])Chapter 435 - Gnomes... Gnomes... Gnomes... - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 435 - Gnomes... Gnomes... Gnomes...

The smile he wore grew as the fifth creation he fought crashed into the ground under him, metal bending inward from the force he applied with his hammer.

Over and over, he struck in a display of power, turning the thick chest of his metal opponent into a crater. Its appendages no longer moved as sparks and liquid gushed from the destruction.

They’re fleeing.

Looking in the direction he knew the last of the six was, Max stood upright and frowned.

Gone was the manicured landscape. Instead, there were large furrows of dirt with mangled pieces of his opponents buried in them like trees.

Those who had been near the fighting were crushed or on fire, not escaping the carnage of the one-sided battle.

A section of the house lost a few stones, the noise of their impact against the leg he had tossed in that direction having destroyed less than he had thought it might.

I guess we’ll let them go. Perhaps they’ll bring back more... for now I need to get back to the real reason.

Bob didn’t reply but he could almost sense the disappointment of his decision.

None of the defenses that had been summoned could compare to their strength or speed.

A single Demonic Teleportation had taken him behind the first three and their guns were useless after the first salvo missed.

From there, it was comical how easily he had broken these things like a child's toys in a teenager's hands.

Originally, a few gnomes had come to watch the fight but had fled upon seeing how one-sided it was. Soon, he was back in the room he had left a little bit ago.

Summoning his dimensional storage, he found Gazbnar near the entrance, both eyes widening as the light from inside reached the absolute dark place.

“It appears you and I both live for another moment,” Max said as he reached inside and grabbed the gnome by his purple suit. “Now then, let’s continue our conversation.”

A cry of pain came as the older gnome was deposited on the ground, and Max put a foot on his chest.

“Where is Nimyn?”

Spit flew upward, missing him completely as his captive scowled. “We don’t give up family! Worse is coming and when they arrive–”

“They will die like the rest,” Max said, interupting the gnome.

Turning his attention to the room, he pointed at the artwork and all the bookshelves lined the wall.

“Is this stuff valuable?”

Once more fire began to form around his hand and then a jet of flames raced at a wall, engulfing the section he had aimed for.

“Don’t! Those can’t be replaced!” Gazbnar exclaimed. “Do you–”

Applying pressure with his foot, Max shook his head as he cut the gnome off.

“I don’t care. I’m going to tear this place to the foundation and perhaps destroy every inch of this property you call home. Every gnome or anyone else who tries to stop me before I get what I come for will die.”

Gazbnar was gasping for air, one hand on Max’s boot, trying to lift it off his chest.

“What do you want?”

“You know what I want.”

Shaking his head, face all read, the gnome protested.

“She… Nimyn just returned. I know she has something but not what… where she is… I don’t know.”

Easing the pressure of his boot, Max studied the gnome for a moment.

I believe he is partially telling the truth. His eyes and face seemed to react only to where, not what.

Do you think she would keep what she stole a secret?

If the truth about how rare they are is real… perhaps I’m beginning to understand why gnomes are no longer wanted in your world or perhaps others.

While he spoke, an item appeared in Gazbnar’s left hand and the gnome grabbed Max’s ankle.

Recognizing what it looked like, he didn’t hesitate.

[Phasing]

A silver ring went through where his ankle had been and a look of surprise filled the older gnome's face as Max stepped back.

“You–”

No other word came as Max’s weapon came forward, blade piercing the gnome's chest, still phased.

“That was a poor decision,” he stated.

A look of relief came as Gazbnar grabbed at the weapon, finding he was still alive and not dead.

“Hah, you–”

Blue eyes went dark as Gazbnar’s mouth opened, and a spurt of blood gushed out. Then he went still as the blade returned to its usual self, still embedded in the gnome's chest and heart.

A wave of cold washed through him as notifications passed by.

“That was not a smart move at all,” Max said out loud as he stored his weapon, grabbed the ankle of the corpse, and tossed it into the dimensional vault he had not yet closed. After that, he bent down, grabbed the ring that had fallen to the stone floor, and inspected it. He could sense something similar to the item that had imprisoned him on Igarra’s world.

It would appear that stupidity is a common trait among many. What are the odds that more of those exist on other worlds?

Before this, I would have imagined it being less, but now… it would appear that perhaps many worlds operate in some ways off of things like that. I doubt most have the ability to acquire them yet, but if one could…

Grunting, he stored the ring and finally paid attention to the smoke that was filling the room.

Take care of the rest of it. We’ll try that other door.

Bob didn’t wait, sending fireball after fireball at the other walls and torching the books and other flammable objects.

You did mean it when you said you would burn it down.

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Crushing the head of the automaton that had been grasping his ankle beneath his boot, Max turned his attention on the older two gnomes who were running to a set of metal doors, attempting to stick a card into the slot it belonged.

Thirty-seven of these things… we're definitely costing them a lot of tokens.

Bob's laughter came as he sent one last bolt of lighting at the pile of metal scraps they had created.

His wounds were healed already and the few that had come from whatever energy weapon was used didn't do much compared to Gazbnar's.

He moved slowly, letting the pair and their shaking hands get stable enough. The two metal doors swung open as they began to rush inside.

Moving with his real speed, Max was upon them like a predator, having simply toyed with his dinner. His hand now grasped each one by the back of their necks and lifted them upward, stepping into the room they had tried to run.

High above, the lights he had first seen when he looked down through the windows continued to float in the air slowly.

Ignoring their shouts and struggles, he moved along the orange carpet, walking to where the first display was. An old hat with a spinning crystal flower was suspended in midair.

"Put us down! We're going to tear you apart!"

Sighing, Max shook his head.

"It was Gludarao, right?"

"Gudarno! Gudarno Flukepitch!" she shouted.

Her brown hair fell over his gloves and bracers, yet Max didn't care.

"And it was Niziver?"

Grunting, the gnome slapped at the hand that held his neck, not replying.

Summoning his dimensional space again, Max tossed the pair in, grinning as they shrieked at the sight of Gazbnar's corpse.

"We're going to talk while I look at these things. I suggest you both take me seriously when I tell you I'm looking for Nimyn and nothing is safe until she is in my hands."

"I'm never going to tell you about her!" Gudarno exclaimed. The look she was giving him could curdle milk or worse. "She's already probably gone to another world!"

Max smiled and turned to the pair who had done the same as the previous captive, finding an invisible wall that blocked their escape.

“Then I’ll keep searching until no world is willing to offer her a place to stay. I’ll burn down all of them until I get back what was stolen.”

She knows what was taken.

Yup. You can see it in her eyes. Besides, it’s easy to see that is her mother.

Ignoring the pair and the sobs of the male gnome, Max summoned his weapon and after making it into a large two-handed hammer, positioned himself from the old hat.

An overhead swing shattered whatever protective barrier had been in place, smashing the hood to pieces and earning him a shriek from both gnomes.

“You fool! Do you know how much that is worth?!”

Her mother is a feisty one…

Moving to the next case, where a pair of gloves hovered, he repeated the process, crushing and destroying it while ignoring the sounds of protest coming from his vault.

Nine more items found their fate beneath his weapon when the air around him began to almost crackle with energy. Max turned toward the two doors that still stood open, hearing the sounds of heavy steps coming.

Moving quickly to where his Vault was, Max got in a position, shield out, and a claymore was now in his hand, looking to see what was coming toward him.

A standard-size gnome with an ugly purple outfit and the crest upon it was chasing after the ugliest gnome Max had ever seen.

Unlike the rest, it stood about nine feet tall and was a conglomeration of flesh and metal. Half of its face was the original part, and the other, as Bob had informed him, was a finely crafted robotic one.

Thick, grotesque arms with pistons and stretched purple and gray flesh were covered by metal resembling plate armor, specifically built for it.

Beyond a few joints, each part of his body had a weird green metal he had never seen for protection.

“This is the one?”

Its voice sounded like it was being spoken in a box.

“YES!”

“Now you’re going to suffer,” Gudarno said from behind, her voice almost happy from the tone.

“You… Ifrit. Champion of world TYR-80921. Please do not resist and return with me for judgment. Your actions are not approved. You have no authority on this world. Failure will result in your termination.”

One eye had a red gem that moved in sync with the real one and its face didn’t exhibit any emotion as it spoke.

“Uh… Can I ask who you are?”

A black metal card appeared in the oversized gnome's hand.

“I am CP-8D0. The council has routed me to this position where news of your actions has been heard. The Flukepitch family has filed a formal complaint and you must be held for a hearing in which you will be charged with destruction and loss of life.”

“And what if I told you that Nimyn Flukepitch stole something from me on my world and attempted to kill me?”

Its head twitched slightly from side to side in its oversized neck and shoulder area.

“That does not matter. Section 4058X8028 dictates that all complaints between worlds must have the council's approval. As you do not have that, you will be required to surrender. Please put down your weapons and surrender.”

Laughing, Max shook his head and pointed his weapon at CP-8D0.

“I’ll do no such thing, and you can tell the council or anyone else who might be listening. The two Flukepitchs aren’t going to escape and will most likely die because they won’t turn over Nimyn. I’ve survived multiple world champions and even the attempt on my life by their daughter. Trust me when I say this…”

Glaring at the creation of flesh and metal before him, Max felt his lips curl.

“I’ll burn down anyone who stands in my way. On any world.”

CP-8D0’s head twitched slightly, and then two five-foot-long curved swords with two power cores each appeared in his hands.

“Then I must use force. According to Section 8675349, you have forfeited your right to a trial.”

Lowering himself slightly, Max grinned.

“Indeed I have.”

Links

//[2025-04-30 15:25]

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/113262/moon-cultivation

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29/436(1) Chapter 436 – Choices 1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2246199/chapter-436-choices;29/436(1[Waybak_First2025-05-02 10:40],[Fav2025-05-02 10:39],[word2025-05-02 10:40],[publish2025-05-01 15:02],[Last_edit2025-05-01 15:02])Chapter 436 – Choices - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road

Chapter 436 – Choices

“Would you be willing to relocate this fight outside? The amount of relics within here is far to valuable to risk destruction while I end your life.”

He’s serious?

I believe there is someone, most likely from the council, speaking through him. The way his head moves occasionally before he responds makes me believe that.

“This comes as a request from those back in the city?” Max asked.

“It does.”

“Then no. If you won’t help me bring to justice the one who stole from me, everything in here will meet the fate of anyone who opposes me.”

A faint smile that was almost humorous as the metal and flesh side moved as one appeared before CP-8D0’s head moved slightly.

“Your decision has been documented.”

The moment the last word came from his opponent’s mouth, it moved far faster than any of the creations Max had faced all day.

Both swords flashed with a red glow, and the impact of each sent him staggering backward as he parried and blocked them.

Quick strikes with tremendous power assaulted him, the swords flashing red and then green after each attack, creating a barrage of metal that would have crushed or killed most people.

Yet beneath it all, Max smiled and waited, knowing what Bob was doing. A ball of lightning formed near the top of the glass ceiling, mana poured into it as half a dozen wind blades formed.

Each time he was attacked, Max positioned himself near another item, watching as it shattered beneath the barrage. He knew that if someone was watching or getting a report, how frustrated they must be to see their own champion be the one to cause destruction.

Half a minute passed, and the room was filled with splintered wood smashed and destroyed objects, all trampled underfoot and ruined.

Only three more items remained in their cases. They were set on a small platform on the far side of the room and his opponent had taken great liberty to keep them from shifting in that direction.

As quickly as the assault started, it ended, both swords missing chunks of metal from where they had connected against his weapon and shield, no glow present and a loud popping sound came.

From both weapons, the power cores that had been in them cracked and fell out.

“You… are strong… their report was incorrect,” CP-8D0 stated. “I am not a match. You are far beyond the potential I or–”

The creature before him jerked, and his arms began to move slowly, shaking with each inch they moved.

“You’re being controlled, aren’t you?”

A grunt and pained expression came as metal lips curled upward but the flesh ones moved down.

Those things can do this...

It would appear he is controlled by strings. A shame really.

“I’ll end your pain,” Max said as he shifted his stance and set his feet. “But only after those who are watching realize the error of their ways.”

As the creature before him struggled to fight against the commands it had been given, Max moved to the platform and swung his weapon at the first object.

From CP-8D0’s mouth came a pained guttural cry. Next, its body dashed toward him, but not before the second case was shattered.

Both swords came at him, and a burning light from the red-gemmed eye was locked on him.

“I can’t…”

Max didn’t need to hear any more words, he understood what had to be taking place and could only imagine the life and pain the creation before him experienced daily.

Easily dodging the two strikes, he smashed the last object, a pair of bracers that began to arc and smoke the moment his weapon crushed them.

Sensing the power that was coming from them and having witnessed something similar, he didn’t hesitate.

[Blink]

Appearing right inside the open section of his dimensional storage, Max watched as the space around him began to suck in on itself, stone pulling from the floors and

walls. The glass ceiling fell as thousands of pieces, each one flying as a trained dagger to the ball of power where the bracelets had been.

His eyes saw firsthand what he had experienced once already, and he had no desire to endure it again if it was possible.

“What have you done?”

A fist smacked into his side, but it didn’t do a thing as Gudarno struck him repeatedly.

Ten seconds later, his entrance to the dimensional area hung in the air.

Sobs came from Niziver and the gnome woman pressed her hands and face against the magical barrier she couldn’t escape.

“It’s…. Gone… all gone…”

Beneath them for a half mile in diameter, the landscape of this block was no more. Like the space in Quan Ma where Nimyn had set off a smaller one, this to was smooth and cut like a sphere into the ground.

“I warned you. This is only the beginning.”

Turning to where the two gnomes were, he smiled.

“Perhaps I won’t kill you… instead, I’ll strip you of your wealth and power. Then when the world burns I’ll hand you over to them. Maybe I’ll even stick around to watch the trial that takes place.”

“The capital… she’s in the capital.”

“Quiet!”

Max caught Gudarno’s hand as she attempted to hit the gnome on the ground. Without waiting, he pulled out a rope and bound her, tossing her to the purple stone floor.

“Where in the capital? And trust me… I’ve tortured enough people to know how to make certain they don’t want to lie to me.”

Tears still running down his cheeks, the gnome shook his head.

“I won’t lie… just… don’t do what you said you’d do. Kill me at least. That would be a mercy.”

“Then tell me where Nimyn is.”

“I’ll kill you! She’s my daughter! Next in line for–”

“For what?! It’s all gone! You saw it! All our wealth! All our power! How many will come for us now that we don’t have what we had? You know what else was destroyed… what kept some at bay… With that gone…”

His shoulder slumped, and Niziver went limp.

Gudarno was still scowling, yet her mouth only moved, and no words came forth.

“The command to not destroy things… that was because they wanted what you had on others? Blackmail?”

“Yes. Thousands of years worth… gone… in a moment.”

Rubbing his chin, Max considered what that could be like for this world.

“Why have something like those bracelets in that room then?”

Scoffing, the gnome looked up at him, eyes red from all the tears.

“You don’t have any idea how something like that works. Only a fo… person not trained in them would smash them. Setting them off is a last resort thing. No one would wear them because if you did and someone knew what they were… the potential to be used as a walking black hole is strong.”

“How many more of those are there?”

A look of contemplation flashed across the gnome's face as he stared out the open doors of the dimensional area.

“On this world?”

“Yeah.”

“Less than fifty… maybe less than forty now if Nimyn used hers. They’re rare… very rare and no one would ever waste theirs. I’m surprised she used hers because of what it requires to make them..”

“What does it require?”

“A power source that none have seen in ages.”

“Like a dragon core?”

He began to blink rapidly, and Max thought for a moment that the gnome might break his own neck, considering how fast Niziver had turned towards Gudarno.

“She’s making one… you know what she’s making!”

A snort was all the woman gave as she turned her face away from both of them, rolling on the floor until her back was facing them.

“That’s why she’s in the city. To make one and possibly unleash it. If she does that… is that what she stole from you?”

Slowly, he nodded, watching the gnome’s lips and cheeks pull back as horror swept across his face.

“We’ll need to move quickly then. I’m not sure how we can get to the capital though if you can’t use the train.”

Smiling, Max held out a hand and helped the gnome up.

“I can take care of that problem. I’ll give you my word. Help me find her and stop this mess, and I’ll either put you somewhere safe on this planet or provide you with transportation to mine. Double cross me and–”

“No, I’ll help. If what she is planning is what I think it is, I don’t want to be any part of that.”

“And what would that be?”

“War.”

***

Niziver had settled down, and the good part about the experience was that Max held the gnome off to the side after teleporting back to Din Buldar.

I wonder if someone far below is going to be struck by that.

You never cease to amaze me with what you find funny.

Handing the gnome a water skin, they waited as Bob kept them afloat in the air.

“We’re flying… and without a gravity belt or boots… amazing.”

“Focus, where is Nimyn?”

Nodding, the gnome started looking around and pointed off to the left.

“Can we head that way? I think I know where I am, but we will have to make sure. I have ridden on air transport only once, and that wasn’t here.”

Bob immediately took off, and Max chuckled as the gnome gripped his hands tightly that held his waist.

“There! Over there! Where we’re headed is a place that will be guarded by two of the gnome council members. We could try to get a meeting with the other races of the council, but I have no doubt you are probably the number one public enemy right now. As such, we can’t get close without a lot of fighting. Even still…”

As the city below raced past them, Niziver occasionally pointed slightly.

“You… do not seem to be the same person who I witnessed back at our property. Are you?”

Cocking his head, Max glanced down at the gnome who couldn’t see his expression, the wind blowing past them as they flew above.

“You mean a cold-blooded killer?”

“That would be a good way to put it. Yes.”

“I don’t like killing,” Max replied, ignoring what he felt coming from Bob. “I’ll do it if I have to and your daughter–”

“Step-daughter.”

“Step-daughter… stole something I had promised a friend to keep safe. I could almost look past her trying to kill me afterward, but I cannot forgive stealing the dragon core. For that… she will suffer.”

“I understand. And your promise to me?”

“I’m a man of my word, which is why you never want me to promise to do something horrible.”

Neither said anything momentarily and then Niziver pointed downward to the right.

“Over there, see that blue and green building?”

“There are four of them.”

A chuckle came from the gnome, his stubby fingers pointed at one in particular.

“Yes, but that one is bigger than the other three. That’s where we’ll find her.”

“And you know this how?”

“Because a long time ago this was her mother's dream, and it became Nimyn’s as well. To start a war between the dwarfs and the goblins, allowing us to swoop in and take over the pieces left afterward.”

“So she is creating a weapon to use and blame on the others?”

“Only the dwarfs are believed to have a dragon core. If that’s true or not, no one knows for certain. Yet if a real black hole bomb went off, powered by a dragon core, it would destroy… maybe a hundred miles.”

Max winced as he considered that idea and the amount of life that would be lost.

How much… I mean… the destruction…

A world would suffer far greater than that. To lose so much of itself. It might spell the end of everything.”

“Show me where to land. I’ll try to keep you safe, but if you’re not in my storage, I may not be able to protect you.”

“How often can you summon it?”

“Time’s not a problem, why?” Max asked.

“Then perhaps I’d rather be in there. I’ve no doubts you’ll face things much stronger than what was back at… our old property.”

Stopping his descent, he willed the space to open and set Niziver inside.

“What floor do I need to get on?”

“There are fifty floors in that place but if I’m honest… it’s underground. No one does that kind of work above ground with what they're building.”

“Yet you didn’t have a place like that back at your home,” Max pointed out.

“That’s because we didn’t do that kind of stuff there. That place is here.”

Links

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[none]

30/437(1) Chapter 437 - Stealth Mode

Next Chapter: 2025-05-02 15:02

[2025-05-01 10:42] 1)
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2248950/chapter-437-stealth-mode;30/437(1[Waybak2025-05-02 15:05],[Fav2025-05-02 15:04],[word2025-05-02 15:10],[publish2025-05-02 15:02],[Last_edit2025-05-02 15:02])Chapter 437 - Stealth Mode - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road
Chapter 437 - Stealth Mode

“What kind of security will I encounter while inside?”

Niziver moved to where Gudarno was while Max asked that question, rolling her onto her back.

“Where is it?” he asked, straddling her.

“Go hump a ogolao!”

Sighing, the gnome shook his head and bent down, holding his hand near her chin.

“I’m going to warn you… if you don’t tell me, I’ll use these fingers and do something we both know you hate.”

Max could see the woman’s eyes widen, her mouth open for a moment before she clamped it down tight.

A few seconds passed, and then Niziver looked at Max with a frown.

“Sorry for what you’re going to have to endure.”

Wondering what was going to take place, he was about to respond when the gnome curled both fingers under Gudarno’s chin and began wiggling them around, tickling her while saying *gullie gullie gullie* .

A sharp scream came from the tied-up gnome before laughter burst forth, her whole body squirming and spasming.

What in the gods…

These gnomes are some weird people. I thought for sure he was going to hit her.

Having thought the same thing, Max was torn, unable to look away as Niziver continued to tickle the woman for almost a solid minute, cries for him to stop occasionally making it through the laughter, tears rolling down Gudarno's cheeks as she bucked beneath him.

"You ready to tell me?!"

Panting and crying the woman sniffed and shook her head.

"You're a monster! You know–"

A squeal came as he stuck a few fingers under her chin again and started wiggling them.

"Stop! Stop! My bosom! In my bosom!"

Not removing the fingers wedged under her sharp chin, Niziver used his other hand, working it around the rope, and began to *search* the area she had just mentioned.

Smiling, he pulled both hands free and held a purple card with the same family crest on it that had been plastered all over their home.

"Next time I tell you I will do it, perhaps you'll listen."

Large sniffles and deep breaths came from Gudarno as she glared at him.

"You're… a bastard! Why I married you in the first place–"

"Because you needed what I had. Now shut it, or I'll take off my shirt and stuff it in your mouth!"

Once more, the gnome quickly closed her mouth. After a satisfied nod, he walked to where Max was waiting outside of the door from the dimensional area. Niziver moved like he had just conquered a mighty beast.

"You're going to need this," he stated as he held it out. "When you get inside, a few areas won't unlock with the card. I've never been to all the floors below the building so I can't tell you what all is under there."

"Just how big is this place going to be?" Max asked, taking the card and storing it.

"At least ten floors, perhaps even more. Some will be at least thirty feet tall. Others might be bigger. All I know is their family has been in the business of crafting things that require a lot of space and have safeguards in place to prevent potential explosions or fires."

A memory popped up of something from long ago.

"Do they craft barrels of liquid that burn and won't go out with water?"

“Boom boom juice?” Niziver asked, cocking his head. “I… I’d like to know how you might know about that but no, that’s something the dwarves and goblins often work together on. It’s very dangerous, and gnomes have a particular dislike for burning to death.”

Giving a quick nod, Max motioned to the ground.

“I’m going to go ahead and go in. Take this, and I’ll open the door again when I’m somewhere that I can.”

Handing a light stone to Niziver, he watched as the gnome admired it and took a step back.

“Be safe, and please find a way to stop her from doing what I think she is attempting. Too many people would die on all sides if she accomplishes that.”

Willing the dimensional storage to shut, Max looked at the city below and tried to devise the best strategy for this next step.

With the card I guess we can enter from the street entrance and then try to find a way down. Anything else we need to figure out?

Odds are, eventually, our presence will be known. We’re in the capital, which means there will be a faster response from guards and, I’m guessing, people from the council.

You may not be able to get the revenge you want if we’re going to have to retrieve Rakonath’s core and get out of here.

Are you worried we’ll be too weak against what comes after us?

No, it’s not that. You are you and seeing how you gave Niziver a chance to redeem himself, I know there is still a part of you that regrets the loss of innocent lives. I could feel the pain you hid when the knowledge that every gnome in that building was killed, even though it wasn’t by your hand.

You don’t want to rampage this city, but we both know you will if that is what it takes to get the core. If you can manage to accomplish that task without doing so, we both know you’ll be better in the end.

Max felt a twinge of pain at the words Bob spoke, knowing that there had been a moment of regret and sorrow, knowing that what he had promised to do would cause the death of many who didn’t deserve it.

You know me too well. Still… if I must, I’ll raze this city and world.

But at the same time paint a different target on your back. Still, no matter what is required, I will always be here to help as needed.

Done with having a discussion that needed to be resolved, Max felt himself moving in the direction that they needed to go, ready to finish up this headache he hadn’t planned on and get back to his friends.

***

Max slipped the purple card into the slot inside the *lift* as one of the gnomes on the lowest floor of the building had called it.

We need things like this that move people up and down.

As the card slid in, a panel appeared next to a bunch of numbered buttons, this time revealing the key **B1** .

Pushing it, he felt the metal box begin to move downward.

Over a dozen seconds passed, and the movement stopped. The metallic gray doors pulled apart, revealing a long corridor with lots of lights and a desk with a pair of gnomes sitting behind it.

Still stealthed he moved into the area and saw one of the gnomes look up quizically, waiting to see who might step out of where he was.

“Are the lifts messed up? No one’s coming.”

“Nope,” replied the gnome who was reading something. “But if no one is coming out, I’d guess someone changed their mind. If you want, contact the boss and tell them about it.”

“Oh hells no, I’m not buggin' her. She’d chew my chin off for pestering her.”

Both gnomes chuckled and turned their attention back to the papers before them.

Max had skirted around them, glad that no alarm had gone off as he focused on a door at the end of the hallway, past the guard area.

Another spot for a card was present, and he put it in. The door unlocked, and he slipped inside, noticing that neither gnome at the desk seemed to notice.

He found himself in another hallway with glass windows and gnomes inside areas that reminded him of Tang Mu’s alchemist shop. Each gnome wore ugly purple outfits but had masks covering their faces.

Dozens of different ones were working on apparent projects and experiments.

Max stealthily passed all of them to the lift he found at the end of the hall. He entered it and saw a **B2, B3,** and **B4** button.

All the way to the bottom?

That would be my choice.

Selecting the option that they both felt was right, Max found his mind wandering as the lift moved downward.

Just how powerful is a dragon core? I mean if it can create that kind of weapon what else can it do?

The real question is how powerful a fully mature dragon core could be?

And you’re wondering the same thing I am thinking. What if Kuneoss had one.

Neither of us knew they existed, and it wasn't something we could sense. All we took were certain organs we knew had value, as well as the scales and teeth. Then again if he was in a place where nothing had come for hundreds of years, was it providing him strength and nourishment?

A light over the doors lit up, illuminating the **B4** . Both doors pulled apart, revealing a place like Niziver had described.

The ceilings here were at least forty feet tall and were cut from solid stone, and a circular quarter-mile section was filled with easily a hundred automatons and gnomes all working and moving on different objects.

Two large bay doors that had to lead somewhere were on one end, a craft that Max figured had to be an airship as it had no wheels was hoisted up on some blocks, getting pieces of metal attached to it.

Everywhere sound was present and people moved at a slow and steady pace.

Along the outer walls were different smaller doors, and, not wanting to hang around the lift any longer, Max took off for the stone wall and looked for another way down.

Conversations about food, drink, clothes and more were common topics as he passed different pairs of gnomes. Some items had to be mechanical things, such as names like Spanner-72 for a Jizhork bolt, which made no sense to him.

Up ahead, where those two gnomes are.

Max saw the guards standing by doors, which resembled all of the other lifts.

Each had a gun in their hand and armor that looked thin yet gave off an aura of power.

Seems like a good thing to have if you don't want just anyone going in there. I can either kill them, knock them out or create a distraction as I doubt they're just going to leave on their own.

Bob chuckled as Max scanned the area near the lift and the guards and saw some kind of mechanical cart and horse being worked on. Pistons, tubes, and a power core were exposed. A gnome in purple garments would do something and then move to a bench, studying some blueprints and then going off elsewhere.

We can hide in that cart, start the commotion, then restealth and see if we can't draw them away.

With the worker gone, Max did just that, climbing into the long storage area and breaking stealth, letting Bob summon a small bit of lightning when his skill was ready to be activated again.

The lightning ball touched the exposed power core, and the mechanical horse lept to life, dashing across the open area. Max quickly activated stealth, getting out of the cart it was pulling.

Chaos ensued as the mechanical beast rammed into other areas near it, always moving in a circle. It ran over a few gnomes who tried to get in its way. The pair of guards Max moved by finally reacted, leaving their post, weapons drawn.

The second he felt it was safe, he pushed the button and waited.

Neither door opened, and with each passing second, the chance to be unnoticed vanishing quickly.

Two shots rang out and an explosion came, a wave of heat washing over them as Max sensed the guards had removed the threat to everyone else.

When will this get here?

I have no idea.

Frustrated, Max watched as one guard shouted and gave orders to the gnomes who were attempting to put out a small fire and the other began to move back to where he was invisible.

If the door opens now, he'll see it…

Unless you have a better idea of how to stop that, we'll need to make a decision.

Frustrated, Max's eyes scanned the room, knowing his options were diminishing by the second.

The moment came when he realized that there was no way to hide where he was.

With the guard just four steps from returning to his post the sound of the lift door opening behind him set the stage for what would come next.

31/438(1) Chapter 438 - Lower Levels

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https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2251616/chapter-438-lower-levels;**31/438(1[Waybak_First2025-05-05 10:42],[Fav2025-05-05 10:40],[word2025-05-05 10:45],[publish2025-05-03 15:02],[Last_edit2025-05-03 15:02])Chapter 438 - Lower Levels - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 438 - Lower Levels

Entering the lift, Max ripped open his dimensional space as quickly as possible and grabbed Niziver, pulling him out and closing the space.

“What–”

“Pretend you’re supposed to be here,” Max whispered as the guard made his way to the lift.

“Master Flukepitch… I didn’t realize you were here today.”

Grunting and smoothing out his clothes, the gnome nodded as he stood upright.

“Yes, my presence wasn’t announced… what is all this commotion?”

A wince flashed over the guard's face as he motioned with his head behind him.

“One of the creations seemed to have malfunctioned. We’re working on it right now.”

“Hmmm.. if that’s the case, I will return down below and come back up here a little later. Carry on.”

A sharp salute was given, and then the guard turned around upon reaching his position from earlier.

Niziver pushed the button on the lift, and once the doors closed, Max felt the tension ease slightly.

“Thank you. It was better than slaughtering them all,” he informed the gnome. “Ready to return to where I had you?”

Chuckling, Niziver shook a little and nodded.

“I’m not going to lie. I was quite scared at first when you grabbed me, and the next thing I knew, we were in this lift, and I heard your voice but couldn’t see you. Still, we’ll need to hurry. If someone does check the logs and notices I’m not listed, it could cause someone to investigate.”

Max summoned his dimensional space again and helped the gnome inside, no longer invisible.

“I noticed you selected the 10th floor. Is that where you expect her to be?”

“If she isn’t, you’ll probably find her on the 9th floor, as that’s the only other floor I could imagine them attempting to create something with a dragon core.”

“Thank you again,” Max told the gnome as he willed the opening shut.

You were lucky he didn’t break, and they didn’t push him for information. That distraction seemed to have bought us some time.

I know… it was the only thing I could think of that didn’t require me killing someone, and while I’m certain we could take those guards, I was more concerned with an alarm or something going off and making it harder to find Nimyn.

When the light that marked the **B10** floor was finally illuminated, Max entered Stealth and held his breath as they opened up.

A long, tall room cut in the same black stone was at least a half-mile wide and fifty feet high.

Over a hundred automatons stood in columns and rows, all painted purple and with the family crest upon it. Each had a rifle similar to the one the guards above had been carrying.

On the other side of the large open area were dozens of vehicles that had a set of three guns, each barrel wider than a dwarf.

It appears someone is already preparing for war.

Yes, and the audience is gathered further ahead.

He could see the group Bob had mentioned about three hundred yards away, eight or nine gnomes all standing around a bench where Nimyn was bent over, working on something.

Next to them were a pair of gnome creations similar to the CP-8D0 he had fought, except Max could tell they were a little taller and more refined. They didn't have a bulky appearance as his first real opponent and their entire head was metal, no real flesh visible that he could see from this distance.

Both wore a mark he didn't recognize.

He could see the stolen core on the stone counter, its glow radiating slightly as different metal wires and something else covered a chunk of it.

Rage began to build, and Max summoned his weapon and shield, choosing a sword long enough most men would need two hands, but he didn't. He wasn't like most others.

Be cautious and remember why we are here. Collect the core, then worry about revenge.

Bob was right. He needed the core first and could always retreat home, returning to fight another day.

Taking a single breath and letting it out slowly, he calmed himself just enough not to make stupid mistakes.

Let's do this.

He raced forward, his eyes fixed upon the core. Gone was his shield, choosing instead to have at least one free hand so he could grab it and secure it.

Forty yards from where the two large guards were, his face collided with an invisible barrier.

The impact didn't hurt as his body was too tough, but his stealth broke, revealing himself to the red eyes that had been almost lifeless, now blazing with energy and focused on him.

"Intruder!"

Everyone in the room began to turn, yet with his speed Max sensed the problem wasn't just behind the barrier and the two creations that were moving as he was.

The automatons on his side of the barrier began to activate, a humming sound echoing off the stone as he sensed the heads of some of the closest ones turning toward him.

His eyes were locked on the core, and Nimynwas watching as she slowly looked up from whatever she was doing to the core and the metal contraption on the stone counter.

Both blue eyes were behind goggles, but as the lenses rotated, he could see the look of shock as they dilated.

Wind Blades began to sweep out from around him, crashing into the nearest purple-garbed machines as they turned, weapons lifting upward and pointing in his direction.

Bob!

No reply came as he dodged to the left, a chained weapon with a four-edged curved star spinning past the location he had been standing, just as quickly being retracted by the gnome warrior creation on the right behind the barrier.

"Kill him!"

Nimyn's voice somehow rose over all the sounds of carnage as gunfire erupted behind and around him, the mechanical machines slowly coming to life as their barrels tried to track him and light began to glow on them.

Lightning streaked from above, bouncing off the barrier as the other large gnome creation left its safety, its right hand holding a sword unlike any he had ever seen. In the middle was a grip and on both sides were two blades, each over four feet long. Its left hand had a shield with three barrels on it, and they began to illuminate with light.

Energy blasts were coming from both sides behind him, and Max's shield was between himself and the two larger opponents. He sensed the chained weapon coming at him again, moving with a speed that felt almost impossible except that he could fight this fast.

Stone walls rose from the floor as Bob used his mastery to create barriers, the spinning weapon striking one and bouncing off, sending some shards of the new barrier flying.

These stones are strong enough to repel those attacks if I keep them that thickness. Focus on the two before us, and I'll handle the smaller ones!

His newest opponent came at him from above, that dual-bladed weapon moving with a speed almost as fast as him, and as he descended the shield let out three shots simultaneously.

[Demonic Teleportation]

The sound of that strike on the floor where he had been rang out, and Max could sense the destruction of automatons behind him.

Bob was hacking them to pieces with stone fragments and wind blades.

Another salvo from his opponent's shield kept him hiding behind his own as they seemed almost to track his movements. Its sword rang out as the weapon struck against his.

"You are the one they spoke of," it said, another hollow-sounding voice coming from the metal smile. "We shall dispose of you."

Pieces of metal, stone, and ice filled the air as they moved with a speed no one could catch a glimpse of.

If… only one… I could…

The spinning chain weapon came again, no longer flying straight but curving and adjusting its flight pattern somehow.

When Max dodged it, four canisters came out from it, erupting in a gas that immediately began to burn.

[Acid Attack Resisted]

His eyes watered, and his throat felt raw, but for the most part, he was fine as the cloud of yellow smoke began to fill the area they were fighting in.

A pair of walls went upward, catching the sword user as it tried to take advantage of the cloud, stumbling when Bob sent nine-inch stone spears at it in rapid succession from all sides.

I'm almost done with the smaller ones. Keep dodging.

Max wanted to laugh, knowing that it hadn't even been ten seconds and yet in that short amount of time his skill had ravaged the creations of those in this room, no doubt destroying large amounts of tokens in the process.

He could see the group of gnomes. They were gathered around the stone table where Nimyn was.

It's descending!

Yes. Focus on these, we will follow them after!

Frustrated at how the situation was going and the knowledge that Rakonath's core was still out of reach, Max parried the spinning weapon strike that came for him and decided to change things up.

[Mirrored Image]

His clone appeared and darted to the side, gaining distance between himself. He charged the one with the chained weapon.

The sword user faltered momentarily, large chunks of stone having torn parts of its flesh off that were exposed. The metal armor surrounding it kept it mostly safe from Bob’s attacks.

Help the clone. I’ll deal with this one.

Max could sense Bob using his abilities to support his copy, knowing that the stats it possessed weren’t going hold up long against the level of opponent it was distracting.

[Metal Mastery]

He activated this ability, having never tried against an opponent like this and watched as the creation slowed down some, its limbs suddenly acting like they were moving through water.

Smiling, Max slashed with his sword, catching the bottom left foot as the gnome tried to get its shield down in time but failed.

His blade cut about four inches, rending metal and flesh, slicing off the front six inches of its foot.

Blood and a green liquid splattered against the stone as he blocked the strike coming for him and twisted, using the momentum for a backhanded slash, his Metal Mastery skill allowing him to prevent what should have been an easy parry and strike the right leg.

His blade bounced off, leaving a small dent in the armor, which he knew was thicker than the first hit he had landed.

Another burst of energy came, and Max summoned his own stone barrier from the floor, moving into position as he prepared for what he knew was possible.

He lowered his guard, preparing to feint and watched as his opponent took that opportunity, the amount of resistance it faced from his Metal Mastery becoming less.

With its weapon coming at him, Max made his move.

[Demonic Teleportation]

[Power Strike]

[Magical Strike]

[Rampage]

This time, his weapon didn’t suffer the resistance it had before, cleaving through half of his opponent's body, causing it to shudder and both arms to extend outward and upward.

A metallic roar came from behind him, and immediately Max sensed a change in the opponent his clone was fighting.

The stone spikes that Bob was harassing it with no longer seemed to do anything and his sonar told him that the opponent was growing in size.

Both its height and width expanded, the weapon moving faster than it had just seconds before and no longer did the stone walls his skill tried to block with stop it completely, now shattering beneath the increased power.

Hurry here! This clone is–

Before Bob could finish that statement, the spinning weapon impaled itself in the clone's chest, never stopping its rotation as flesh and blood were sent out in a spray.

No cold sensation came from the attack he had landed on the that fell to the floor, but somehow Max knew it wouldn’t be that easy.

As if that thought was prophetic, another roar came from the last opponent, and its weapon began to glow white.

That can’t be good...

Links

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[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/110709/mage-steel-a-western-sci-fi-cultivation-series

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32/439(1) Chapter 439 - Smashing New Things 1)

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2254109/chapter-439-smashing-new-things;32/439(1[Waybak_First2025-05-05 10:41],[Fav2025-05-05 10:41],[word2025-05-05 10:55],[publish2025-05-04 15:02],[Last_edit2025-05-04 15:02])Chapter 439 - Smashing New Things - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road

Chapter 439 - Smashing New Things

Beams of energy like the ones that had been shot from the guns the automatons carried flew in every direction as the spinning weapon now released them from its curved tip.

Each time one was sent out, it caused the blade to spin even faster.

Max had to constantly shift his shield as he twisted and turned, hiding behind it as his opponent sent the flying weapon toward him.

Suddenly the chain detached and the blade became completely airborne, impacting and grinding for a moment against his shield before rebounding off, still sending energy beams at him while it flew away.

As that attack took place, two chains came at his back, having been turned while he faced the now-freed blade.

I got them!

Stone walls rose and were shattered as the onslaught began and never let up. A flying blade in the air and two thick metal chains, each trying to strike him from different angles and sides.

Seconds ticked by, and the air grew thick with the dust of the shattered stones, which added to the smoke from the carnage Bob had created amongst the automatons he had destroyed.

A glance revealed that Nimyn and the other gnomes were gone, the area they had been working and standing having descended into the stone floor somehow.

Focus!

His mind raced as he considered the options they had.

Let’s get close and end this.

After deflecting the blade's attempt to cut him in half, Bob blocked both chains with a pair of stone blocks, and Max moved toward his opponent.

The large spinning metal object came at him, seemingly moving faster, but as it drew close, he didn’t try to block it, running right at the chains and the gnomish creation that snarled at him.

[Incorperal]

All three attacks missed as they passed through him. Faster than a single heartbeat, Max stood behind his opponent, watching Bob work his magic.

The stones on the floor gave way, grabbing hold of its large feet, surrounding them like shackles, and preventing the gnome from turning or moving.

Each hand drew back the chain it held, whipping the eight-inch metal links as if they were nothing, but Max didn’t care. His mind wasn’t focused on blocking or protecting himself.

Now behind his opponent, he set his feet and swung his weapon.

[Harden Body]

[All Cooldowns Reset]

A twinge of frustration came through their bond, and Max knew it cost his skill power that Bob needed in order to do this.

[Power Strike]

[Magical Strike]

[Berserker]

[Rampage]

His body became solid, and as it did, his weapon cut through the thicker metal and flesh, not concerned by how much more mass had appeared from somewhere.

Three strikes severed the waist in half, sending the top section toward the ground.

Not giving this abomination a chance to recover, Max continued the onslaught as Bob summoned two stone walls and pushed the tumbling section back at him. Hacking through the flesh and metal.

Soon, there was no actual midsection left after a few seconds, only chunks of metal and flesh. The spinning disc had careened to the side and bounced off the stone floor as it slowed down.

A cold wave of power he hoped for never came.

Nothing?!

It would appear they aren't… alive.

Unable to keep the frustration inside, Max shouted, storing his weapon and moving to where the platform had been.

Whatever barrier had been present was gone, and now, there was a solid sheet of metal on the floor.

Still enraged, Max retrieved his weapon, turned it into a pickaxe, and began attacking the metal plate.

Dents grew bigger and bigger until, finally, a hole appeared. A quick glance told him that the metal was well over a foot thick. Seeing that it wouldn't be possible to hack his way through, Max changed his focus to the stone next to it.

[Metal Mastery]

It groaned under his attempt to contro it, noise coming as it shifted against him.

[Stone Mastery]

Together, he and Bob worked on the area where the protective cover was connected. Using their combined focus and effort, they could pry up the sheet enough to stack stones they removed from the floor near it, creating a raised wall that would allow them to slip under.

Beneath it was darkness and his sonar told him it was a long shaft that stretched to the very limit of his range.

It's over fifty yards deep.

The longer we wait…

Without hesitating, he ducked and dropped into the shaft, letting Bob control their movements with the Wind ability while he kept his shield and weapon ready.

As they descended over a hundred yards, they finally sensed the shaft had a metal plate that cut it off.

I've got no idea if they believe we'll defeat those two things or not, but on the off chance there are more defenses of some kind down there, I guess we'll try to be quiet.

Chuckles from inside his head came as they worked together to shift stones from one edge, creating a space for him, and finally retrieved a block that sent light from below inside.

Down beneath them was the group of gnomes huddled around the same table, and it appeared they were working on a large spherical object, Rakonath's core set inside it.

A lattice of metal with energy surrounded his dragon's core, and Max could see dozens of smaller power cores were set within the metal on the outside.

That doesn't look good at all.

It would appear they are finishing up that weapon.

He could see what Bob was talking about: thick metal wires running to two large boxes bursting with energy.

Let's do it.

Falling Max didn't make a sound, coming down like a snowflake at night, unseen and unheard until he chose to be noticed.

[Blink]

His foot came upward, kicking a gnome in a purple suit who had been about to set a power core into a slot of the sphere. One moment, there was a living being. The next, a red mist.

Without hesitating, he grabbed the large metal object that was half his height and tried to store it, frustrated that it wouldn't go into his storage.

"Stop! You–"

Max didn't care which gnome had spoken, summoning his dimensional vault and tossing it inside, making sure to aim away from where Niziver was sitting.

It careened inside, stopping when the metal cables that were attached to it grew taut and fell against the purple stones.

"STOP THAT! You don't–"

Nimyn's words were cut off as his weapon sliced through the power cables and they began to slither like snakes, arcs of energy leaping from them and frying two gnomes who happened to be closest to the bouncing fingers of death.

Willing the vault to shut, Max was on Nimyn, his hand around her throat, lifting the gnome off the ground and holding her out before him.

Metal-tipped fingers gripped his wrist as her boots kicked at him, not connecting as he held her at arm's length.

Gurgling came as he stared at her, ignoring the other gnomes starting to back up, all of them suddenly realizing how the tide had shifted.

“I warned you,” Max growled, pulling her close until their noses almost touched. “I told you. You didn’t listen.”

His fingers loosened slightly as Bob fought against his rage.

Let her breathe. It’s not time to make her suffer yet.

Grunting to no one, he stopped fighting his skill and allowed air to enter the gnome's lungs, turning to see the others running toward a metal platform on the other side of the gigantic cavern.

A teleport pad…

Stone walls began to rise, boxing them in and forcing them to clump up. Soon, Max had corralled all the escaping gnomes, putting them in a box of his own making.

“You… can’t stop me,” Nimyn gasped. “You… can’t undo what I did. It’s too–”

Chuckling, Max already knew what she was going to say.

With a slight bit of pressure, he cut off her words, moving to where the group of gnomes were trapped.

Inside, they all were plastered against a wall, two of them frantically pressing buttons on a bracelet they were wearing.

“Who do we have here?” Max asked as he watched them all freeze.

“You can’t do this! Do you know who he is?!” one of the gnomes in an orange robe shouted as he pointed at one who had to be the oldest of this race he had seen so far.

“Not a clue, why don’t you tell me?”

Red filled the cheeks of the one he had responded to, but a hand on their shoulder stopped them.

“I know who you are, but you don’t know who I am,” the older gnome said. “I am Raszu Demlabick, one of the three members of the gnomish council. I can assure you there must be some mistake if you are here and holding that one captive and having defeated all of the defenses here so easily as well.”

Snorting, Max shook his head.

“Did she not tell you where she got that dragon core from?”

“Specifically? No. Just that she had acquired one at a great cost. It would appear… that she has not been truthful to us. Had we known–”

“You would have made her give it back?” Max asked, cutting him off.

The slightest twitch of his nose was the only reaction the gnome gave.

“We both know that might not have been the case, but we would have done everything in our power to compensate you fairly for it. Even now, I’m willing to pay you far beyond what it is worth.”

Does he really believe that there is a price that they can pay that would make one want to sell such a thing?

We both know he’s stalling.

“I guess that begs the question of what you could offer me for such an item. Especially since it appears it has been turned into a black hole bomb.”

His green eyes widened slightly, and the other gnomes all shifted nervously as they stayed silent, slinking backward until they were against the stone wall.

“A tragedy. Alas, few in this world could deconstruct such a thing, and most wouldn’t risk it. I’m fairly certain that one won’t be willing to do it for you.”

Blue eyes glared at him as her stubby hands dug at his wrist, trying to keep the pressure of Max supporting her by the neck to a minimum.

“I agree that won’t be a possibility. Still, how do you think the other races would feel about hearing such a thing was created in secret?”
His question struck the cord he knew was there and the older gnome’s whole body twitched slightly.

“That would be… difficult.”

“You know, what really makes me wonder is how the council would react to knowing you were a part of this?” Max asked, leaning closer toward the gnome. “I doubt they would take kindly to such a thing. Surely that would be worth something.”

“Your silence?”

His voice sounded almost like a frog, croaking and cracking at the knowledge he was under Max's thumb.

“Yes… I guess we’ll have to deal with that in a moment. No doubt you’re hoping that whoever you sent for will come soon and hopefully be able to save you but trust me, that won’t happen.”

Turning his attention back to Nimyn, Max smiled and used his free hand to grab one of hers, shattering the bones with a simple squeeze. She tried to scream, unable to as he held her throat and repeated it with the other hand.

“Now that I’ve have done that Nimyn, we’re going to resolve something later. Just the two of us.” A cord of rope appeared in his hand. “You and your mother will get some quality time together.”

***

Niziver shook his head as he stared at the collection of gnomes now sharing the vault with him.

Max had bound up both women and stuffed them in a corner. The five gnomes were all shackled together with stone. Far away from them all was the object Nimyn had created.

Sounds of explosions could be heard from the ceiling, and Max smiled.

“I will do one last thing before I open this up. Do you want to wait inside with them or…”

His motion to the ceiling made the gnome shake his head and laugh.

“No thanks! Even if the company is horrible, I’ll gladly be safe inside here.”

Nodding, Max left the dimensional area and closed it.

Now for the last part… trying to get revenge without pissing off a whole planet.

Bob laughed so hard in his head that Max couldn’t help but join in.

[Planetary Travel]

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Links

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//[2025-05-05 10:55]

[None]

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33/440(1) Chapter 440 - No Carrot, Just the Stick

Next Chapter: 2025-05-05 15:02 [2025-05-05 10:44] 1)
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2256771/chapter-440-no-carrot-just-the-stick;**33/440(1[Waybak_First2025-05-05 15:04],[Fav2025-05-05 15:05],[word2025-05-05 15:10],[publish2025-05-05 15:02],[Last_edit2025-05-05 15:02])Chapter 440 - No Carrot, Just the Stick - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**

Chapter 440 - No Carrot, Just the Stick

“Breathe, Fipple, breathe.”

The dwarf was beet red, and his lips had turned blue after the panic attack that took place when Max suddenly appeared near him.

Multiple dwarfs, gnomes, and goblins were frantically running around the teleporting area, most of them pointing firearms at him, hands trembling, yet none pulled the trigger.

“You’re… wanted. Why… are you here?”

“It’s simple. You’re the only one I trust. The council could order more of their warriors… or champions… or whatever they have to come here, but you and I both know they probably don’t want this area destroyed. Those tiny guns of yours won’t hurt me and besides. I need you to deliver a message. One that I’m certain will bring every council member who can here.”

His grin made the dwarf scoot across the metal floor a few feet further from him.

“I… I can ask… but tell me, are you really going to eat the flesh off my bones if I don’t?”

Shaking his head, Max smiled.

“Whoever told that story is lying. Dwarf doesn’t taste good to anyone but dragons, and that requires a proficient cook.”

Fipple’s face didn’t seem relieved, and finally, the dwarf motioned at all the workers present.

“Lower them. We saw that it didn’t affect him.”

All around the room, dozens of firearms were lowered slightly, and the remains of two automatons that had tried to attack him still sparked, crushed under just the single strike of his fist.

“Good, now then, let me tell you what you need to relay to someone.”

***

The apprehension in the room could be felt, and Fipple was shifting nervously next to Max as he leaned against the wall, watching the council members who had arrived. Only two dwarfs, two goblins, and one gnome represented all three races.

He got his first look at one of the three world champions, surprised that the goblin he was facing was barely seven feet tall, but every bit of him screamed death.

That aura… he's intentionally doing that.

Which means he has most likely passed a specific level in the tower. Dagon said we were closing in on it but seemed to enjoy not giving a specific number.

Two black eyes never left him since the red-skinned goblin entered the room. Earrings, nose rings, and nipple rings were on display as a simple toga-like outfit covered his muscular body.

Part of me wonders what all they can pierce… for magical items, that is.

Are you thinking about changing races?

Gods no… still it makes me wonder how items work between different worlds and races. If we brought earrings here, could they use them on other parts of their bodies? Is armor limited?

Standing there and completely relaxed, he considered that idea until the second gnome council member arrived and everyone turned their attention to him.

One of the dwarves motioned at them, and Fipple cleared his throat.

"They're ready for you," he whispered.

"Are they not going to talk with me?"

Wincing, the dwarf shook his head.

"Not until you prove your worth. In many ways, you're dead to them already. The fact that Troogmado is here most likely means there is another world champion outside. If you fail to impress them… well, just let me escape before that happens, okay?"

Smiling, Max nodded and summoned his dimensional vault, keeping the door closed when he did so.

"Inside here, I have a few guests. One is a gnome which helped me uncover a plot to cause conflict on this world. Know that Niziver Flukepitch is under my protection."

The council members glanced at each other, eyes narrowing he said that last name.

"I'll also be taking out Raszu Demlabick who–"

"You have captured a council member?!" one of the gnomes who was wearing a green suit, shouted as they jumped from their seat."Do you–"

“He tried to build a zero gravity bomb.”

Max’s words cut the gnome off. The man stood there, eyes wide and mouth wide open.

“You have made accusations, but where is this proof?”

Max looked at the pair of goblin council members. Both women wore multi-colored outfits, almost making his eyes hurt as the yellows, greens, oranges, and purples clashed.

“The bomb is inside here, but do not worry it is can’t do anything inside my dimensional area.”

“You have a dimensional space? Interesting… and you’re only a world champion?” the shorter of the two goblins asked.

“That is correct.”

Her black eyes narrowed, and he could feel almost a tingling sensation against his skin.

She is using a skill… I’m not sure what, but I can sense it.

With no other questions coming, Max willed the door open and gasps came as Niziver stood near it, a lightstone in his hand.

“I was wondering how things were going,” the gnome said as he grinned. “I think I’m way outside of my element in this crowd.”

“It is a Flukepitch!”

Motioning for the gnome to come, Max’s newest ally passed through the invisible barrier and bowed at the gathered leadership.

“What is the meaning of this?!” demanded the gnome in the green suit.

“Forgive me, Councilman Longinus. This man has uncovered a plot by those in my family to create a black hole bomb and use it to cause strife between the other races.”

Niziver’s words silenced the room completely and for the first time since the goblin champion had entered this space, those black eyes were now locked on the gnome next to him.

“They what?!” roared one of the dwarves asked as both rose to their feet. “How–”

Max clapped his hands and imbued a little air control with it, creating a louder-than-normal sound.

“Don’t. I’ll answer the questions, but we won’t get anywhere if each of you starts shouting and talking over each other. For now, sit down, and I’ll go over the specifics of what I have witnessed. After that, you can ask any other questions.”

Grumbles and snorts came from both dwarves, but the older goblin woman tapped her wooden staff several times.

“Sit… he’s young but wise. Perhaps smarter than us if he’s uncovered such a truth.”

Giving a slight nod of his head, Max took a deep breath.

***

All six council members were seated again, each holding a drink that the automaton servants had brought by.

It appears seeing a bomb of that size really drove home the point.

Part of me wishes we could stay here and watch the trial of the Raszu and the punishment, but we’ve been here long enough. This side quest is taking precious time from what we need to accomplish and you know it.

“I have one last question,” Oleen, the older of the two goblins, said as she set down her cup. “You believe you can disassemble that bomb?”

Smiling, Max nodded.

“As I already mentioned, I won’t hand this over to anyone. The potential destruction of it is too great. Even if I couldn’t, my storage space is the safest place for everyone here as well on other worlds. If I die, this space will vanish, and no one will ever retrieve it.”

“Not necessarily,” Councilman Longinus muttered.

“I’m sorry, what?”

He waved a hand at Max and shook his head.

“There is a theory out there that all dimensional spaces are potentially connected, though some deny that it is true. Rumors had once said that travel was possible between them, and some have speculated that if that was possible, then others might have a way to access someone's vault like yours. Again, it’s all highly theoretical, and none of the attempts anyone in this room would admit to attempting has ever succeeded.”

A few grunts came, and the rare smile on the others appeared at that statement.

“Still, would you agree that even if I can’t disassemble it, there is no better place?”

The dwarf nodded slowly.

Oleens tapped her staff and then grabbed a metal necklace with a green gem on it.

All the other members present then did the same, the dwarf touching a broach he had seen but ignored while the gnomes pulled an object from their pockets.

They’re communicating. You can see it in their eyes.

Max noticed that Bob was right, watching as slight nods or head shakes came, eyes shifting from one member to the next.

As one they all let out a long breath and Oleens stood.

“We have come to agree you shall keep that terrible weapon for many reasons, and we hope you can successfully disassemble it. None of our people would be willing to try as one mistake would set that off and… well, you can imagine the destruction that would follow. As for the Flukepitchs, you have a claim on Nimyn, but as we said before, we need her mother to stand trial. The people will demand blood.”

“I’m fine with that. I appreciate your wisdom and understanding that I felt I had no choice but to act the way I did.”

She laughed, and Max saw a twinkle in her black eyes.

“Youth rushes in but often does not understand the danger of doing so. You, Max, are young but understand those dangers. While we would have preferred this to have worked out differently, each of us knows that Raszu would not have been caught, and there is no telling what else he has planned. Fear not. We’ll make him suffer as we learn about them. Our world owes you a great debt. Return in the coming months, and we’ll have some items that might aid your growth. In the meantime, we might be open to Niziver finding a position on the council after a decade or so. His honor for all the people will carry many to look past his name and his age.”

“I appreciate you doing this for him.”

She bowed and tapped her staff, causing the large red goblin to look at her.

“Retrieve the prisoners, and be nice. You can stop holding in your breath.”

Laughter came from the other goblin woman as the champion shrank slightly, grinning as he did so.

I think he was afraid of us…

They all were. Now, let’s head home. We’ll need to take care of a few things.

***

Rakonath growled as his silver eyes peered into the dimensional space, seeing the gnome tied up near the sphere encasing his core.

“I wish you would let me eat her… slowly…”

“After I’m done, you can have her body,” Max said, gently scratching the scales. “For now, I’ll need you to give me some time to do what I must.”

“He has been anxious since you left,” Aerthen stated. “The loss has been painful, but thankfully, you have returned quickly. Already, I can see his scales losing the luster they once had.”

Max also realized that was what he had thought, believing it was perhaps the light in the room.

“So that was why your scales looked like they did when I came after you had used up yours.”

Clearing her throat, the older dragon nodded.

“We don’t talk about those things, but yes. Some consider it an insult to say one's scales are dull.”

Tanila squeezed his hand and pulled him towards her.

“You’re going to be okay, right?”

“We’ve talked about this. Inside there is the safest space to do what I must. Anywhere else, I risk damaging the world and the lives around it. Besides, we both know I’ll be fine.”

A huff came from Fowl who was sitting at the table a dozen yards away.

“Just tell her you love her and will return soon. That’s what she’s worried about.”

The sound of a metal cup clanging on the stone floor made everyone look at Batrire, her mouth hanging open.

“You okay, dear?”

“I… I am… it’s just… when did you learn what a woman wants?”

His middle finger came up, and everyone laughed as Max embraced Tanila and kissed her.

“Fowl’s right. I’ll be soon. Nothing will ever keep me from you. Or our child.”

She nodded and, after one last embrace, let him go.

“Don’t worry either,” Max said as he scratched the scales on Rakonath’s jaw. “I made a promise, and I’ll get that back for you.”

A low thrum came from his dragon as Max moved into the dimensional area and willed the door to close, pulling out a few more light stones so his prisoner could see what was coming.

Moving to where she was, he set them down on the table he had retrieved from the bottom of the hidden floor. Tools of all kinds were on it and a few extra had been given by one of the council members who said he might need them. Some made sense but most were incomprehensible.

The notifications from his first kill on the world were still waiting, yet he didn’t care about them. Instead, he focused on the gnome tied up, mouth gagged, and eyes wider than her broken fists.

“It’s time… time to learn the truth.”

He bent down, undid the gag and removed it.

She stretched her jaw, but Nimyn didn’t say a word, eyes still defiant as she glared at him.

“You going to undo that? In here it doesn’t matter if it goes off and as you might have guessed, I can live through it.”

“Go hump a–”

His hand backhanded her, and both lips split.

“Don’t. Trust me, this won’t play out the way you want.”

Nimyn started to laugh, leaning against the corner she was stuck in, still tied up.

“You don’t have any power… even here… I’m the only one with the knowledge you need to dismantle that, and I’ll never do that. I’d rather die instead.”

Max stood and laughed.

His voice echoed through the hall and this time he let himself go.

Lifting his head, his whole chest and body shook as the most humorous joke known only to him and Bob played out in his head.

Finally, after almost a minute, he wiped the tears in his eyes, grinning like a fool.

“You don’t get it… there’s no way you could, but I will let you in on a secret.”

Bending down, he could sense her shift back just slightly, blue eyes staring at him as if she didn’t understand what had just happened.

“You’re going to dismantle that but you don’t realize why.”

“I told you–”

His hand grabbed her throat, stopping the words she had planned to say.

With care, he lifted her till she was on her feet, their eyes almost at the same level as his fingers slowly flexed against her skin.

“No… I told you. You see Nimyn… I have a black skill. A skill called Consume.”

Both of her eyes went wide, and she started to try and shift on her feet, attempting to pull free from the vice that held her neck.

His smile grew as he drew her closer.

“You see… when I kill you… I’m going to get every skill you possess… had you only done what I asked and not played me for some fool or weakling, you could be alive, rich and doing whatever the hell you wanted back on your own planet… Instead…”

He lifted her upward, his other hand grasping the rope as he carried her toward the stone table with the bomb on it.

“Now you’re going to be just a tool for me and food for my dragon.”

Laughing once more, Max sighed.

“Goodbye Nimyn. If only you knew how much I’m looking forward to this next part.”

Her eyes trembled, tears running down her cheeks and over his fingers.

Yet he didn’t care. For the first time in so long, he wanted this kill in a way that felt so primal it scared him.

Do it.

Max’s fingers barely moved, but the bone in her neck still snapped like a dry twig.

A moan escaped his mouth as the cold rush came once more.

Links

//[2025-05-05 15:10]

[None]

34/441(1) Chapter 441 - A Promise Kept

Next Chapter: 2025-05-06 15:02

[2025-05-05 15:07] 1)

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2259802/chapter-441-a-promise-kept;**34/441(1[Wayback_First2025-05-06 15:51],[this.Fav2025-05-06 15:50],[word2025-05-06 15:51],[publish2025-05-06 15:02],[Last_edit2025-05-06 15:02])Chapter 441 - A Promise Kept - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1,L2]

Chapter 441 - A Promise Kept

Max glanced at the notification list that had grown since the first gnome he had killed.

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill does not match Racial Type]

[Consume is able to convert Skill]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Would you like to learn [Administration]?]

[Yes / No]

[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill does not match Racial Type]

[Consume is able to convert Skill]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Would you like to learn [Gnomish Tinkering]?]

[Yes / No]

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill does not match Racial Type]

[Consume is able to convert Skill]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Would you like to learn [Gnomish Robotics]?]

[Yes / No]

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill does not match Racial Type]

[Consume is unable to convert Skill]

[Power stored for future use]

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill does not match Racial Type]

[Consume is unable to convert Skill]

[Power stored for future use]

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Would you like to learn [Robotics]?]

[Yes / No]

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill does not match Racial Type]

[Consume is able to convert Skill]

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill does not match Racial Type]

[Consume is able to convert Skill]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Would you like to learn [Gnomish Power Core Creation]?]

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill does not match Racial Type]

[Consume is able to convert Skill]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a higher level skill]

[Would you like to learn [Gnomish Bombs]?]

[Yes / No]

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill does not match Racial Type]

[Consume is unable to convert Skill]

[Power stored for future use]

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill is lower rank than current skill]

[Power stored for future use]

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill is lower rank than current skill]

[Power stored for future use]

[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill is lower rank than current skill]

[Power stored for future use]

That... is a lot of gnomish skills. What does that even mean?

It took a little work on my end, but I believe we might have more success now with learning skills that belong to other races. I think that traveling to

the other world unlocked something in the system for you. Only time will tell as there were still many I couldn’t get to convert.

Selecting yes to all of them, Max felt his mind explode with knowledge he had never imagined possible.

[Skill Description - Administration]

*****

Administration - Rare: The user has a special ability to quickly understand organizational needs and challenges and create action plans to handle those problem areas. The time required to develop a successful plan decreases the longer one works in the same company or for the same overarching entity. Provides a bonus to leadership and obedience with tasks given within a specific company or governing entity.

*****

[Skill Description - Gnomish Tinkering]

*****

Gnomish Tinkering - Rare: Most gnomes believe you need to know how to tinker if you’re going to call yourself a gnome.

This skill provides mastery of advanced crafting related to gnomish contraptions and automatons. It also grants basic knowledge of gnomish power core weapon creation and an understanding of basic robotics. The crafter will be able to make all components required to build and give life to creations when possible. Advanced materials may result in a higher quality creation. When crafting Tier A objects, there is a 5% chance that a bonus trait or skill will be granted.

When crafting power core weapons, there is a 35% chance that bonus stats may be granted for the weapon. Weapons may have up to one power core.

*****

[Skill Description - Gnomish Robotics]

*****

Gnomish Robotics - Epic: Every gnome believes they are the master of automation and robotic creations. While some might disagree, this skill provides the user with specific knowledge passed down only to gnomish crafters.

The use of high-quality materials, power cores, and other components will drastically improve the quality of their creation. Simple tasks and programmed jobs are easy to assign to their creation. If bonded through approved gnome techniques, the creation will only obey the crafter unless another has a special skill to override this bond.

*****

[Skill Description - Robotics]

*****

Robotics - Epic: The user has a vast understanding and knowledge of robotics and is only limited by the materials they can access. Various constructs, automatons, and other creations can be built and designed.

The use of high-quality materials, power cores, and other components will drastically improve the quality of their creation. Simple tasks and programmed jobs are easy to assign to their creation. If bonded, the creation will only obey the crafter unless one has a special skill that can override this bond.

*****

[Skill Description - Gnomish Power Core Creation]

*****

Gnomish Power Core Creation - Legendary: Every gnome dreams of owning an item powered by a core. This skill makes you one of the special ones who can make that dream come true.

The user may craft power cores from various materials containing energy or magic. These fusions will enable automatons, robotic creations, power core-charged weapons, bombs, and other creations to function. The quality of the power core will determine possible power output. Advanced materials impact the creation rarity. There is a 20% chance to increase the power output of the core by 100%.

*****

[Skill Description - Gnomish Bombs]

*****

Gnomish Bombs - Epic: Ask any gnome over a fine drink about the enjoyment they get from watching an enemy blow up. Their pleasure is drastically increased if such a thing happens due to a gnomish bomb.

This skill provides the user with vast amounts of knowledge in creating hundreds of variations of bombs. Each creation can be as simple as a trigger device to complex multi-staged mechanical devices. There is always a risk that during the creation process, the bomb may be triggered. A 3% chance of detonation is possible, checked every hour during the creation process.

The owner of this skill may also attempt to disassemble any bomb created from the rank they possess or lower. There is a 25% chance the bomb may explode during this attempt due to the volatile nature of gnomish bomb-making.

After all, it wasn’t designed to look pretty on a shelf.

*****

Letting go of Nimyn’s corpse, Max gently massaged his temples.

My brain actually hurts from all that knowledge. It's been a while since we had so much like that happen at once.

Yes, but the possibilities… it's impressive in some ways that the gnomes haven't destroyed themselves or the other races on that planet yet. It also makes sense why the ones who could potentially disarm that bomb wouldn't want to. 25% is a very risky task, especially if there isn't a reward worthy of such a risk.

Looking at the spherical bomb on the stone table, Max knew Bob was right.

The idea that he still might fail to retrieve Rakonath's core upset him.

Do you think if this thing goes off in this dimensional space, the space will be able to withstand it?

Neither of us is an expert on this, but perhaps how the space limits the ability of individuals in here to use their power and abilities will also prevent such damage.

Or trap it in here permanently…

He could feel almost a wince as the idea of a black hole being here forever meant that Max might likewise be stuck as well, unable to escape as his Death Blow skill kept him safe but unable to respond.

But you're still going to try…

He chuckled and nodded, looking at all the tools he had and now understood the use of. He cracked his knuckles.

You're right. I guess it's time to start.

***

Thankful that no sweat was dripping from his forehead, Max slowly unscrewed the last connector, unable to remove the final power core until this piece was gone.

Slowly…

You've said that like 1,000 times… I know.

The hexnut-spinner moved with a speed so incredibly slow a snail might call it boring, making sure not to cause the electrical connecter to shift or potentially power the bomb.

Breathing a sigh of relief as it finally came free, Max quickly popped the power core from its spot and felt the energy that had flooded the metal frame vanish.

With a twist, he felt the two halves separate, and there sat Rakonath's core, needing just a few last metal pieces to be taken away, and he would be done with this entire event.

You did well. For a moment, I thought we were going to die.

Laughing, Max stilled his hands, not wanting to risk the removal of the frame around his dragon's core.

It was a bit scary.

Finally, the prize he had come for was in his hand, and after taking the first real deep breath, Max stored it, glancing over his shoulder at the corpse still on the ground.

He retrieved Nimyn's body and stored that as well, moving to where the entrance of the dimensional space was and willed it to open.

Immediately, he sensed Rakonath and movement, watching the large silver head stop just a few feet from where he had appeared.

"You did it! I can sense your excitement!"

Smiling, Max quickly summoned the core from his storage and held it out.

"I did. I made a promise and nothing was going to keep me from following through."

A wet tongue snaked out, wrapping the core and pulling it into Rakonath's mouth.

It took a lot less effort to swallow it than it had bringing it up, but the silver dragon let out a deep thrum after the lump in its throat vanished.

"I feel… whole."

Scratching the scales along his neck, Max glanced around the room which was empty except for his dragon.

"What time is it?"

"Oh… it's nighttime. The others are asleep. Even Aerthen left so she could fly for a while. If you want I can summon her."

Shaking his head, Max pointed to the large door that Rakonath had to use in order to enter and exit.

"Actually, don't. Instead, how would you feel if we flew together?"

Both of his silver eyes widened and the dragon stood completely upright, banging his head into the stone ceiling.

"You're serious?! You wish to fly? Right now?!"

The tone of excitement was overwhelming, and laughing, Max began to move toward the door.

"Yes! It's the perfect time to try. Besides, I'm pretty sure you're strong enough to easily carry me."

***

Neither said a word as the wind rushed across the both of them.

Two moons shone their light and reflected off the silver scales that sparkled as Rakonath took slow and steady beats of his wings.

Beneath them was the vast desert which stretched for so far, and from up above at night it looked so peaceful.

I can sense that you are… content?

“I am,” Max shouted, his legs wrapped around his dragon’s thick neck, easily staying in place due to his strength. “I can tell you are as well!”

This feeling… this is what I knew was missing. It is as if… suddenly I feel complete. Simply being near each other isn’t enough. Not that I do not like the scratches, but this connection reaches to my core.

Sighing, Max nodded even though Rakonath wasn’t looking at him.

He could feel that same sensation, which he didn’t know existed until now. A part of him was bonded to this dragon and whatever Wekime had done, from this moment on Max knew he would desire this.

Your dragon is right. You have changed so much in just a few hours. Back in that space, I was sure you would have gladly given into the hunger had you ever had a moment like that when we first met. Now… that moment is passed, and you are changing. You are evolving.

Unable to help himself, Max laughed and then suddenly stopped, considering what Bob had just said.

My mother might call that growing up.

Laughter echoed inside his head, and his skill, in some ways, mimicked his inner peace at this moment.

That dragon… I wonder if he knew…

Links

//[2025-05-06 15:51]

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/114613/gamer-girl-isekai

[L2] https://i.imgur.com/tgMXB1r.gif

35/442(1) Chapter 442 - Time to Party

Next Chapter: 2025-05-07 15:02 [2025-05-06 15:53] 1)
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2262087/chapter-442-time-to-party;35/442(1[this.Waybak2025-05-08 9:54],[Wayback_first2025-05-08 9:54],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-08 9:53],[this.word2025-05-08 9:54],[publish2025-05-07 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-07 15:02])Chapter 442 - Time to Party - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[L1],[L2]

Chapter 442 - Time to Party

“I still can’t believe you were flying on the back of a dragon,’ Fowl muttered as the whole party watched Sog’thollech take out another group of animals that seemed to overrun this floor.

“That’s what impresses him and not some demon who's killing everything.”

Max chuckled as their warrior and archer bantered back and forth, content to have his arm held by Tanila, gently rubbing her belly.

“She’s right,” Batrire said. “I mean… I knew… but seeing it… him doing that is a bit scary.”

Sog’thollech’s body wasn’t fully recovered. He had healed quite a bit since eating the corpse Max had given him, but there were still hundreds of scars that covered his skin. Patches of black, purple, green, orange, and even white created a jigsaw pattern of flesh.

His body was a bit misshapen, having four arms and a bit of a pudge, not the muscular and athletic toned body that had been left on this world over a month ago.

“As I mentioned, he needs this just as much as you all do. Besides, you’re not getting any real experience either way. We just need to finish this floor and the next before we reach the 19th.”

“Is he going to help with whatever comes on that floor?”

Nodding, Max heard their ranger snort.

“He’s not that bad to look at… I can see what you described hidden underneath that… hodgepodge of flesh.”

Tanila and Batrire started teasing their ranger whose cheek turned red as she gave them the middle finger.

I’m glad he’s getting power off of these things. Four floors have already affected him greatly.

And his natural strength and speed allow him to cut down those beasts quickly. I wonder what came up with them. Who needs a twenty-foot-tall flaming… bull? I guess that’s what we would call them.

Chuckling to himself, Max knew that was part of their warrior's nickname for these beasts.

Each one left a fire trail as they ran, the scorched stone littered with trails that took minutes to dissipate. As they breathed, plumes of flame shot out, and their horns were covered in a blue flame, growing hotter as they got angrier, which seemed to be a constant state.

Loud moos and roars came as Sog’thollech continued his path of destruction, ignoring the flames and using both swords to land massive gashes, which quickly ended the lives of his opponents.

I’ve stored one complete body. The cut-up corpses have been put in Fowl’s and Cordellia’s space. Now, all we need to do is find an end to this floor and keep moving on.

And then you’re going to stick with the plan?

Tanila’s laughter caught his attention.

White frosting was oozing between their mage’s fingers after she’d snatched the incoming pastry from the air.

“Ladies… let’s try and behave. I mean… we’ll look like fools if you two can’t stop acting like children.”

Batrire’s comment led her to be assaulted by a new cupcake and the previously thrown one as Fowl shifted around the group, keeping well away from the flying pastries.

“It’s good to see them laugh,” their warrior stated upon reaching Max’s side. “For once… it feels like old times.”

“Now all we need is a forty-foot-tall flaming bull to appear, and then it will be just like old times,” Max replied, winking at his friend.

“Gods no… that’s not what we need. Still, I do not doubt we'd be fine between you and your friend. I know I said it before, but you seem… different.”

“Not talking about me being taller, are you?”

Fowl shook his head slowly.

“No… you’re more confident and… focused. Whatever happened, and I’m not asking, with that gnome… you’ve changed. Just know if you ever need it, I’m here.”

Patting his friend on the shoulder, Max nodded and sighed.

“Leadership of a party is one thing. A world… that’s even worse. Toss in what I feel is expected of me and… well, it can be a bit overwhelming. Bob and I have spoken a lot, and I’ve shared what I can with you all. Whatever is coming… it’s beyond any of us right now. Tom’s got two days to finish up what he, Jazzjak, and Quilazmore are working on. After that, we need to return and focus on the tower for a bit.”

Rubbing his chin, Max could feel his jaw tightening.

“Inside me… something tells me that I need to hurry… Don’t get me wrong, I’m not planning on finishing the tower in a week, but with everything pulling us in different directions, we need to focus on it at least in the short term.”

“Whatever you need, I’m here. You know that.”

As the two of them watched the three women smear frosting on each other, both allowed themselves a moment to smile, ignoring where they were or the smell of burnt flesh that permeated the air.

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“That dimensional space of yours feels… weird,” Sog’thollech stated as he prepared to enter it again. “Almost like I’m cut off and yet… not… I think the bond we share keeps me from feeling overwhelmed.”

“You said that the first time you entered it. For a moment, I thought you were going to pass out.”

Grinning, the demon picked at a piece of flesh he was tearing off of himself, removing a patch of green skin and revealing a glossy black patch underneath.

“When you’ve traveled to different planes, realms, worlds and other things like I have, you learn to deal with how they feel. Some are painful, like I’m being stuck with a dagger all over my body. Others make you feel submerged under a liquid, sometimes calming and other times completely the opposite. In your space… it’s like everything, but the thread that connects you and I isn’t there. A void… it’s like a void I’ve only once witnessed and never ventured into. I’m not certain I could escape it.”

His demon friend’s comment caught him off guard, and Max smiled, realizing he hadn’t tried doing that from inside.

“What?” Sog’thollech asked, seeing the grin on his face.

“You gave me an idea to try later. For now, we’ll just do what we’ve done with every floor. Put you inside and then bring you back out once we’re on it.”

“Cheating the system… I like it. Perhaps you’ve got a little bit of demon in you after all. As you know, we’re all about finding loopholes.”

Both of them laughed as Sog’thollech stepped inside and sat on the chair Max had put in there for him.

With a nod, he closed the opening, watching the demon he felt a bond with vanish.

“That’s creepy as heck,” Batrire stated, a shiver running through her. “The way both of you laughed just then… yeah…”

Tanila winced and nodded once, causing Max to look at his friends standing near the tower's portal.

“Was it that bad?”

“Oh, gods no,” Fowl replied. “I mean, unless you don’t like sounding like some homicidal killer.”

Clearing his throat, Max almost said something but stopped.

Am I…

Changing? Yes… Don’t worry, though. I won’t let you go down that path. Now I see the danger of giving in to the hunger. For so long, you fought it, but that one moment with Nimyn awoke what I could not stop from being there. The truthis that if you wanted, you could snuff out the lives of so many and easily possess everything about them. What made it worse was how you set it up. It was personal, and you were delighted to know what was going to happen, no matter what she said.

Wincing, Max felt the stares of his friends and then tapped his temple.

“Bob says he won’t let me become something dangerous.”

Laughter that almost sounded forced came from them all, the truth of that statement seeming harder to believe than he had expected.

“Anyways,” Fowl said, using his thumb to point at the portal behind them. “We’ve got a boss… or whatever floor to do. The 19th floor ain’t going to just surrender itself to us because I’m so handsome.”

“Ain’t that the truth,” Cordellia said. “If looks could kill, that Gorgan would have asked you out on a date.”

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“Well, ogre shite,” Cordellia cursed as they appeared in a room similar to the one they had experienced on the 9th floor. “Are we really in for another fight against a group?”

Max didn’t reply, moving to the blank screen that covered a wall with chairs facing it.

The screen illuminated as if on cue, and a new being appeared on it.

“What in the gods is that?” Fowl asked as being started to speak.

“Greetings, tower climbers! Your time has come to face the next challenge! Take a seat and let’s discuss the glory you’re about to embark upon! Sit! Time is short, and you’ll only get one chance to prepare for what many call the fight of your life!”

The sound of laughter came from the screen and all of them turned and looked at each other, shrugging and moved to the padded stone chairs in the room.

Before them was a timer counting down, and the being on the display was shifting side to side.

This one was a reddish-pink color, still almost like a gelatin of some sort, with a single large orange eye set in the middle of the mass. A large brain floated behind it and pieces of flesh ran from the eye back to it.

“That’s… hideous?”

“You making a statement or a question?” their warrior asked.

“Oh, I’m sure somewhere, something or someone thinks they're attractive… but yah… I’m not into that.”

Batrire was the last to sit, and the moment her rear touched the pad, the timer ended and the being on the screen began to move again.

“PERFECT! Now, just so you know, per TC Rule 42, each party has ten seconds to leave this fight the moment the bell sounds. Simply cry out, “I’m not worthy!” and you’ll be transported back to your world. Remember, everyone watching will see you’re a coward, but don’t let that impact your decision.”

Max saw the look on everyone’s faces, eyebrows lowering as they frowned.

“Now on to the good stuff! You’ll be facing off against four other teams! Exciting right? Death is always a possibility, but today, it’s a guarantee! Don’t worry, though. It’s not permanent until the end!”

An eerie sound of laughter filled the room, and Max couldn’t help but wonder what they were hoping to accomplish by having such a sound after.

“We’re playing the contest everyone knows and loves! I’m the best and above the rest!”

The screen flickered and a circular area filled the screen. Different views started to appear with a top-down version, a side one, and another that moved through it. Thick tan stones, each at least four feet wide, were used to create the fighting area.

“As you can see, there are walls that create a maze to the center point of this arena! To make things fair we have also implemented a forty-foot ceiling to prevent giving those fliers an advantage!”

Five dots appeared evenly around the outer edge, and then a bell sounded.

As one they began moving through the maze, working towards a center section.

The three different views zoomed in on the area in the middle. It had to be a hundred yards in diameter without any walls or defenses.

Surrounding it were multiple areas with shortened walls, holes in them, and corners, all providing ways to see and potentially attack the middle.

A single glowing section about twenty feet wide was made of red-colored stones, resting against a stark tan stone area.

“Want to win? Be the team to control the middle point for the longest! The battle will last for sixty minutes! If, at any point, a team holds the middle for over thirty minutes, the fight will end. Now for the good part. When you die, you’ll respawn back at your starting spot. Now for the important details!”

A column appeared with names and numbers laid out in rows.

“Each of you is given three deaths. Die less than three times, and you’ll find yourself back home at the end of this game, losing only your honor. Fall four or more times in battle, and if you don’t win… well, let’s just say the tower thanks you for your sacrifice!”

Cheers seemed to ring out from all around them, and Max watched his friends turn their heads, trying to find out where it came from.

“You’ve got five minutes before we start! Good luck and start planning! Only one team can win, but remember, everyone can work together to ensure someone dies!”

The screen returned to the three different views of the fight about to take place, and immediately, the room temperature changed.

“Four teams… we have to fight them?”

Max nodded at Cordelli, who grimaced.

“We’ll be fine,” Tanila said as she stood up. “All we need to do is figure out who our opponents are and then devise a plan. If nothing else works, perhaps Max can just stand on the center and kill everyone who comes after it.”

Fowl was the only one who laughed, coughing and stopping when he realized it wasn’t a joke.

“I guess it’s a good thing we brought a sixth. When we get inside, I’ll bring Sog’thollech out. No matter what. We’re not losing.”

Links

//[2025-05-08 9:54]

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/amazon/B0DVKD7FB4

[L2] https://www.audible.com/pd/Ruinous-Return-Book-2-Audiobook/B0DXX1LPXT

36/443(1) Chapter 443 - When You're The Strongest

Next Chapter: 2025-05-08 15:02 [2025-05-08 9:56] 1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2264498/chapter-443-when-youre-the-strongest;36/443(1[this.Waybak2025-05-08 15:16],[Wayback_first2025-05-08 15:16],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-08 15:15],[this.word2025-05-08 15:17],[publish2025-05-08 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-08 15:02])Chapter 443 - When You're The Strongest - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road

Chapter 443 - When You're The Strongest

Max and the others stood on an illuminated section of stone.

“It’s shielded, can’t get through it,” Fowl said as he banged his hammer against it. “I guess this means we’re not going to get a head start.”

“We’re fine. Give me a minute as I summon our sixth.”

The dimensional area opened up, and Sog’thollech quickly stepped out, taking a few deep breaths like every time before.

“Sorry… it always gets me.”

Waving the comment off, Max turned to Cordellia and watched as she summoned her wolf.

Its purple fur seemed almost to glow as it sat beside her, eyes scanning their section.

“What’s the plan?” Batrire asked as she cast her buff.

Tapping his head, Max grinned.

“If the design they showed on the screen matches up with the real thing, I’ve already memorized the layout. If not… I’m going to try and bust our way through everything.”

“Of course he is,” their warrior declared as he rolled his eyes. “It wouldn’t be our Max if he didn’t.”

A timer appeared above them and a ten-foot floating image of the red gelatinous creature was near it. On the opposite side was a list of names with teams. Images of each participant’s face or whatever would be their remembered feature showed up next to their names.

“Be ready! Everyone is placing bets and –”

The voice trailed off as the singular eye went wide, shifting slightly on its body.

“It appears a team has already left the area. That means –”

Once again, the voice paused and the counter stopped as well.

“Two... no three... I mean...”

With two seconds left on the counter, a loud bell sounded.

“It... appears we have a winner... before the match has even begun.”

White light illuminated the section they were standing on, and a moment later, they found themselves standing on the flat, open area in the middle of the arena.

“What the heck just happened?” Cordellia asked, spinning around with her bow drawn.

“I think we won,” Tanila said, tapping her staff against the red stone they were standing on.

An image they all recognized began to materialize before them.

Their last announcer’s orange body came to life before them. His body was bouncing up and down and it looked like he might not be happy.

“How?! How did you come again so quickly?! You’ve chased off the competition and cost us much!”

“I’m sorry, come again?” Max asked, watching the illusion never stop its quivering.

“You shouldn’t be here! I told you… warned you… the cost of this fight not taking place… the credits and power that was spent to host it… do you have any idea how much you are going to impact my numbers?! No you can’t! Everyone is waiting to–”

Suddenly the sound cut off, and they could see the blob moving in a totally different fashion, almost gyrating if that was possible as his top half twisted one way and the bottom in another.

“What in the gods is he doing?” Fowl whispered.

Shrugging his shoulders, Max stood there, armed for battle as they all were.

“You know what that being is, don’t you?” Sog’thollech asked.

“Not a clue. Do you?”

Chuckling, the demon nodded. He stood next to Max and crossed his arms.

“That is the… I believe you might call them… Higrubrogor race.

“The Higorboraor what?” Fowl asked.

“Higrubrogor… Hig - ruuuub - ogre. They’re a power species that makes much money off things like fights and presenting entertainment. Some of them are exceptionally intelligent, and others are as dumb as a rock. Still, none mess with them because of the following they possess. Even some of the more powerful demons learned the hard way about getting on their wrong side.”

“What does that entail?” Cordellia asked. “I mean… I’m not sure which side is their bad side but what happened?”

Sog’thollech grinned, his sharp teeth all on display as he looked down at her.

“They offered a reward for those who wanted to hunt them. Part of was the broadcasting option also. You wouldn’t believe how many signed up. Neither of those demons lived long either.”

Max was about to ask a question when the sound suddenly returned from the image before them.

An ugly, mucus-filled cough came and a small bubble of something escaped the creature's mouth.

“Ahh, forgive me! It appears that your presence has caused an uptick in our viewership. It would seem that your competitors all know what you look like and realize their odds of winning were not very good. In all our years of hosting this, not once have all four teams quit before the fight started.”

At no moment did the Higrubrogor before them ever stop his dual rotation.

“Now then… per the rules, I proclaim you the winners of this *fight* . Unfortunately, like last time, I currently do not possess any kind of reward that would usually help your kind. If you were willing to accept potions that would work with your body type, I could…”

The two eyes stopped as it stared at Sog’thollech who stood there, grinning like he had just eaten a whole dwarf.

“A demon? Here? When did, how did–”

“He’s with us,” Max said. “Part of our team.”

A sound like a wet fart came, and both Fowl and Cordellia glanced at each other and burst out laughing until tears were streaming down their faces.

“I do not know what has those two acting as such, but if that *demon* is part of your team then I must grant him a reward as well.”

Max nodded, and Sog’thollech looked thrilled, rubbing his hands together.

“So potions and… essence?”

“Yes please!” the demon exclaimed. “I’ll be more than happy to take it!”

A gurgling sound came, and a small metal chest appeared near them on a stone platform just a few feet away.

“Very well. Take your rewards and know that if we detect you in another arena, we will be forced to put you against some of the stronger opponents.”

Max studied the image before him and wasn’t sure if the Higrubrogor was smiling or not.

“I guess we’ll just have to wait and see,” he replied, moving to where the chest was.

The image vanished and as he opened the lid, the rest of his team came to where he stood, both their warrior and archer struggling to breathe.

“You two going to be okay?” Batrire asked.

“That sound… it was as if...” Cordellia said, trying to get some air in her lungs.

“Like he sharted… but way worse than anything I’ve ever seen or heard.”

The pair started laughing again, faces redder than an apple the entire time.

“Let’s get this over with,” Tanila muttered as she nodded at Max.

With a flick of his wrist, the lid flew open and inside the small box were five pink potions and a black bottle.

“That one’s mine,” Sog’thollech said as he leaned over and plucked out the black one.

The demon did not even attempt to undo the metal lid on the bottle, stuffing the whole thing in his mouth and biting it to bits.

The smallest drop of the liquid flowed down the corner of one lip, and he quickly used a finger to catch it and licked it off.

A moan that made everyone freeze came from the demon, who noticed how everyone was looking at him, causing him to laugh.

“Oh… you have no idea! Pure essence! There are few things a demon could ever want… well actually, there is a very long list, but just know, this is at the top of it!”

The patchwork skin started to molt, and Sog’thollech began scratching at the flesh with both clawed hands, sending pieces of it like torn leather to the ground.

In less than a minute, he emerged from the old skin, a much darker and glossier black body rippling with muscle now before them.

“Uh… can I get one of those?” Fowl asked as he glanced up in the air.

Chuckling, the demon shook his head.

“Oh no, my little friend. Only a few races can handle pure essence. This is something like… those gems you all collected in the tower. Just a lot more powerful.”

A sigh of what Max assumed was satisfaction came from the demon as he picked at his teeth, pulling a sliver of glass out before sticking it back in.

“You all going to see what you got?”

Everyone nodded at the demon’s question and turned, watching Max take out the first pink potion.

[*Inspect Potion*]

*****

Potion of Mystery

- Random Effect

Crafted by a crazed alchemist who always liked to have fun. It will most likely not be harmful, but no refunds will be issued in the case of death or disfigurement.

*****

“Yeah… this might be a problem,” Max said as he frowned.

“What does it do?” Tanila asked as everyone reached in and took theirs.

“Possible death or disfigurement? What kind of crappy potion is this?” Fowl asked as he stared at the pink liquid from different directions.

“Oh a potion of mystery?” Sog’thollech asked. “Those are quite expensive!”

“Really? How come?”

The demon looked at Batrire and bent down till he was on one knee and closer to her height.

“Imagine a potion that can literally do anything and I mean almost anything. Why you could sprout wings, grow ten feet, get double your normal stats, change races, grow a beard, lose your beard and even die! The potential is limitless!”

Everyone cut their eyes at each other, noticing just how excited the demon appeared, not quite yet understanding that they were not growing wings or extra appendages might not be something everyone wanted.

“So… I guess for now we’ll set these aside?” Max asked as he stored his.

“Bah… part of me REALLY wants to drink mine,” Fowl whined. “I mean… Imagine if I grew two feet.”

“No extra legs to go with those two feet?” Cordellia asked.

A groan came from everyone as their warrior expressed his displeasure with a gesture.

“I guess that makes this next part real easy,” Max said as he pointed at the portal that had appeared behind them.

“One hundred percent,” Tanila replied, taking his arm and leading him toward it.

***

“Haha, I saw that on the broadcast today,” Jazzjak said as he looked up from his tablet. “I set an alert, and it notified me. I was excited to see your team in action for a moment, but it was quite comical as the other teams recognized you and quit. The betting swung massively in your favor, and they had to stop taking them because of how lopsided they were.”

Everett coughed and pointed at the three stacks of papers before him.

“We’re ready if you are, Max,” the older man stated. “I think I’ve finished what you requested sooner than expected.”

Smiling, Max took the pages given to him and began scanning them, his Administration skill immediately picking up on what Everett was proposing.

“Do you believe creating a council overseeing smaller complaints would work here?”

“You stopped too early. Read the other two pages.”

Ignoring the grumbles that came from Everett, Max did just that, finding that his Faction leader had listed why.

Within thirty minutes, only two small changes were made, and the three of them all looked satisfied with everything.

Standing up, Max shook both of their hands.

“You two did a great job. I’m grateful for–”

“MAX!”

Quilazmore had suddenly appeared from a doorway he formed in the wall across the room, sweat drops coming down his brow.

“You need to come! There’s a challenger!”

It took a moment for him to acknowledge what the dark elf had just said, seeing that he appeared anxious at mentioning such a thing.

“I’m sorry, what?”

“A challenger has come and announced his desire to fight! Tomorrow!”

“Mother humping honglo,” Jazzjak cursed. “My wife is going to kill me for canceling dinner again!”

There in that moment, Max started to laugh.

Inside his head, Bob joined in as well.

“I don’t see how either of these things is funny,” Quilazmore said. “His wife really will kill him, and this challenger isn’t a joke.”

“Oh, I know,” Max said after taking a deep breath. “I’m laughing because I’m excited about facing a challenger.”

Everett shook his head and stored the paper he held in his hand.

“I guess we’ll go and meet this one?”

“No,” the dark elf said, holding up a hand. “Only Max. None of us want to be in the same space as this one.”

Links

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[none]

37/444 Chapter 444 - Problems for Another Day

Next Chapter: 2025-05-09 15:02 [2025-05-08 15:19] 1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2266708/chapter-444-problems-for-another-day;37/444(1[this.Waybak2025-05-09 15:05],[Wayback_first2025-05-09 15:05],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-09 15:04],[this.word2025-05-09 15:05],[publish2025-05-09 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-09 15:02])Chapter 444 - Problems for Another Day - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road

Chapter 444 - Problems for Another Day

The pressure was overwhelming the moment Max stepped through the portal that Quilazmore had created for him.

A shadow covered the arena floor, and he could sense the presence of something immense, far larger than any opponent outside of Igarra, which was over a quarter of a mile away. Power radiated from around where it was cloaked in a swirling vortex of some kind.

“You must be Ifrit,” a voice declared, each word reverberating with power as it spoke. “I am Zogooruth and have come to claim this world as my own.”

Straight to the point, at least… thoughts?

Bob seemed anxious, and Max could sense the concern through their bond.

Whatever it is… they’re strong. You can feel the aura it puts off. It makes sense now why that elf didn’t want to come with us.

“And if I refuse?”

No thunder ever sounded as loud as the laughter from the shape washed over him. It took a few steps toward him. Each one reverberated the ground, causing the white stones to turn black and purple, crackling under the effects of something.

Max finally noticed the black stone that covered the challenger's entire being, with shadows seeming to shift and move around the edges of its body.

“Then you shall die just as all the others I have faced. Your previous opponents were nothing compared to me and that trick with your dimensional space will not work against me.”

Max felt rifts of some kind opening up around him, and he jumped back, seeing swirling areas near him, leading to what appeared to be nothingness.

Void magic… this is bad.

“You can leave this world and take your friends, even those dragons. I will not stop you from taking anything you can carry with you. Just know that you cannot return here, or I will consider it an attack against me and therefore grind you beneath my foot.”

Looking up at the colossus before him, Max knew the thing had to be at least seventy feet tall if his sonar was working right. The void rifts and the ambient area around this creature were causing it to suffer feedback of some kind.

“Can I ask why you want this world?”

Another booming laughter came, and Zogooruth stood up.

“Does it matter? Why do you want this world? I have learned you are not from this planet and only came into possession of this because you defeated Igarra. Do you consider your life and your friends worth a place with no ties?”

“There are some here I consider friends. I do not abandon friends.”

“I told you that you could take them. With your dimensional space, you could easily pack a hundred beings in there if you wished. Surely, you have not gained that many here in the short time you have been present. Still, none of this will matter. None will remain once I take ownership of this world.”

He’s going to consume it…

The people?

The whole planet. I can remember something… a memory. A race that slowly devoured worlds. His power… I believe that is what he will do.

A pain lanced through his chest as Max began comprehending what Bob told him.

“You would destroy this world? The inhabitants as well?”

Something that might have been a snort or something like it came from Zogooruth and a large stone finger pointed at him.

“What happens when I own this world does not matter. Do not be foolish and pretend to be some hero who must protect all life. You have killed many in your climb to power, and I am aware that you have much more potential in the coming decades. Perhaps one day you can have your revenge if you feel that how I must survive and

grow is atrocious. Just know, compared to many, I am kind. I will offer everyone who resides here a chance to leave before I feast upon this lush world. They will have years to escape before my feasting reaches them."

"You would just… kick people from their homes?"

The ground shook as Zogooruth's foot slammed into the ground.

"I am not here to discuss this. You feed how you must. You kill that which must die in order to grow stronger. None have questioned your eating of an animal or the life you snuff out with a weapon, have they? So do not judge me for how my kind lives. I'll give you eight hours. Send that elf back with an answer. Until then, I shall wait here. Just know, in a day, I will either expect you to be standing across from me, ready to die or have left this world with whatever you deem worth taking."

He wanted to reply and shout but sensed the colossus moving back slightly, void rifts surrounding the giant being, and hiding its presence from Max's sonar.

Let's go. We need to talk.

***

"So… what was it?"

Max turned the cup of alcohol in his hand, not caring that it didn't affect his senses, just needing something to focus on while his mind worked.

"A void colossus," he replied, watching the vorpal bunny's nose twitch at subsonic speeds.

"Here? That means… our world…"

"What's a void colossus?" Everett asked before the others could.

Quilazmore cleared his throat, having fixed his hair and regained his composure since the moment he had appeared in the room.

"Powerful beings that consume worlds. One of this size is… dangerous. Far more than I think many could imagine if they were not as educated as I am about things like this."

Jazzjak tapped on a pad as the dark elf spoke and then pointed at a display on a wall near the table where everyone was sitting.

It lit up, displaying a few images of what Zogooruth must look like.

A humanoid golem, covered in dark black stone, with purple lines occasionally running through it, was front and center before everyone. Slowly, the large image spun around, revealing no real weak spots.

"This is what it looks like when they consume a world," the rabbit said as the image changed to one with both its hands plunged into the ground.

The black rock slowly spread from where its body was, changing the fertile soil and causing trees to topple over as the new matter reached them.

“It’s draining the planet of life,” Cordellia gasped as she covered her mouth.

“Can you stop one of these?” Fowl asked.

Both Jazzjak and Quilazmore frowned.

“Some might say it’s possible,” the dark elf replied. “But they are extremely resistant to attacks, have control over void magic, and their only weakness is a heart inside them. While that might seem like a place to focus on, just know they heal quickly and getting to that heart is exceedingly difficult.”

“And it appears he has studied your fights,” Jazzjak stated. “Which means this is why he came. Your dimensional space won’t impact him at all. He can most likely block it.”

“What if we fought in water?” Max asked.

“It wouldn’t do much against him. They don’t breathe, and his ability to use his void attacks wouldn’t be impacted. Against most, it would probably give him the advantage since water slows down the majority of beings.”

Tanila’s hand squeezed his forearm.

“You don’t have to fight. I know your pain, but trust me, this isn’t your battle.”

Max could sense the others around him all moving their heads in agreement. Even Jazzjak and Quilazmore seemed to agree.

“But all those who live here–”

“Would be granted a chance to go elsewhere,” the vorpal bunny stated. “Most would take up that offer and flee. There are plenty of worlds to start new on. Trust me when I say this, Max. I know you’re strong and have a kind heart, but this fight… It’s not one you should take.”

“He’s right,” Everett chimed in. “We don’t understand all that you’re dealing with but if those who know what that thing is and how dangerous they are tell you to stand down, listen to them, son.”

Max winced and saw the look on the Faction leader’s face.

Concern was etched in the wrinkles as he frowned slightly, eyes softer than usual.

What do you think?

For once I think we need to listen to them and run. Zogooruth was right. There may come a time when you can get revenge on him for what he has done, but right now our focus isn’t supposed to be on this world. You have a job to do and that requires returning to your world and conquering the tower.

What was all this time we were here? Wasted?

A sigh came from Bob.

No. You've grown and matured. You've learned skills that will aid us in the things to come. The bond between you and Rakonath has deepened and every world that saw your fight knows of your power. Word will spread that you made the right choice and are not foolish. Right now, the only thing I see is us leaving here alive. To fight… is most likely the end of our journey. Even if we defeated it somehow, I'm not certain we could consume anything.

Part of him wanted to scream. The other part of him wanted to cry.

Max saw the looks of concern on everyone, his gaze stopping when he locked eyes with Aerthen.

Her face was hard, and her jaw was set. Those golden eyes seemed almost alive with fire as she stared at him. Everything about her posture seemed upset as she sat in her humanoid form in that stone chair.

"You've been quiet. What are your thoughts?"

Tapping her nails against the table, the red dragon huffed.

"I've never seen a man more cursed and blessed simultaneously. You have the backing of our father, two dragons, a demon, and a group of followers committed to you, yet you turn down the advice and wisdom given.

"Did you not have me flee when my home was overrun and I couldn't protect the charge you gave me?"

Slowly, he nodded, already seeing the direction of this discussion.

"And am I less of a being that when you are told the same thing, that wisdom is suddenly invalid?"

"It's not that… it's a world–"

"Of creatures you don't know and aren't required to protect. Each will have the chance to flee to a new place and start over. There are times we must fight and times we must fly away. Your time right now requires you to fly away."

A slight thrum came from the silver dragon lying near the table.

"She's right. You and I both know it. I can sense that you understand the truth of all this. Tell me, Max, would you risk death knowing that the woman you love and the child she carries would have to live without you when all you must do is take the offer that was given and return home? Would you abandon me over others who will never love you or care about you as all of us do?"

"That's one smart dragon," Max heard Fowl whisper to Batrire.

"No… you're all right. Still… how do I announce to a world they are about to be forced from their homes?"

"With dignity," Jazzjak said, both ears perking up. "You will stand before them and send out a message that the time has come for each of them to find a new place to

live. None will fault you as each of us here understands the choice of fighting or not. Remember, we can only grow stronger by fighting. Yet when we know there is no chance, most will choose to flee and attempt to return another day and find revenge."

"But what about dinner with your wife?"

Laughter came from everyone as both ears drooped on the rabbit.

"I will hope she understands that this is a good enough reason you could not make it."

Patting Tanila's hand, he smiled at her and nodded.

"Fine, I'll send out the message and tell Zogooruth I won't fight him. But do any of you wish to join us on our world? Would that even be allowed?"

The rabbit and dark elf both glanced at each other, smiling as their eyes seemed to convey words without sound.

"Now, hold on a minute," Everett said as he held up a hand. "We need to discuss exactly who all and how many we could be bringing. I'm not sure I can house a hundred new… beings in our faction house, and if we bring too many back with us, it might cause a bit of a problem."

Laughing, Max shrugged and then drained his cup.

"When have I cared about causing you problems?"

A groan came from the Faction leader as everyone else started to laugh.

Links

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[None]

38/445(1) Chapter 445 - To Realize One's Weakness

Next Chapter: 2025-05-10 15:02

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https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2269194/chapter-445-to-realize-ones-weakness;38/445(1[this.Waybak2025-05-12 14:13],[Wayback_first2025-05-12 14:13],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-12 14:12],[this.word2025-05-12 14:19],[publish2025-05-10 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-10 15:02])Chapter 445 - To Realize One's Weakness - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 445 - To Realize One's Weakness

“I’m impressed with your choice. Part of me expected you to face me.”

Resisting the temptation to change his mind, Max nodded.

“I’ll announce to the world that you will be the new champion. Then, by tomorrow evening, I shall have left this place. Tell me, Zogooruth, what do you fear?”

The aura that always radiated from the colossus faltered for a moment and then returned to normal. It was the only noticeable change Max could pick up on with his sonar.

“Your question… was not one I expected. Why do you believe I must fear something?”

“We all fear something. My greatest fear is those who I love getting hurt because I was foolish or couldn’t protect them. That is why I decided not to fight. Every creature, being, even a god must fear something.”

The ground shook slightly, and waves of force assaulted his ears. The being before him appeared to chuckle.

“What I fear is one day I may regret the choice I gave you. I stand by my word and can see a spark of something dangerous inside you. Still, had your fame not spread across all the worlds, I would have never known about this place. The good news is you’ll not have to worry about anyone challenging you over this speck of dust again.”

“Until we meet again then.”

Max bowed slightly and stepped on the white circle waiting for him, sensing some unknown tension as he left.

***

“My storage is full as well,” Batrire said as she pointed at the last row of chests laid out before everyone. “I can’t get any of these to stay.”

“I guess that means we’ll just use my dimensional space if you think we can stack them up without a problem.”

Jazzjak bounded up from behind as Max summoned his personal vault.

“So… the wife said yes… and you’re certain you want to bring eleven rabid vorpal rabbits to your world?”

A cough came from Everett, who gave him a frown.

“Only if you want to come. I can’t promise you an easy life or that none of you won’t end up on someone’s mantle someday, but provided you all behave, I’m certain we can find you a place of your own.”

Squeaks came from the rabbit as he held his chest.

“Behave? My litter? They don’t know that word, but perhaps they will figure it out before too many of them get in trouble. Still, we are grateful for this offer.”

Max shook the outstretched paw and then moved to grab a chest like the rest of his party.

“Tell Quilazmore that I understand his decision. We’ll be out of here in an hour. After that, I’m afraid we’ll not be able to see him again.”

Clearing his throat, Jazzjak nodded, one of his ears drooping slightly, a sign of his frustration Max had learned.

“He regrets not being able to come, but his wife was adamant about not coming to a world where all the elves are… fair-skinned. He mentioned some blood feud or something between them.”

Tanila’s laugh caught them off guard, and they turned to see redness spread across her cheeks.

“Sorry, there are so many stories about how the dark elves are… well, let’s just say I can imagine why they might feel that way. It’s a shame, really. I was rather fond of Quilazmore.”

“As was I,” Jazzjak stated. “Still, part of me had always wished Sog’thollech had eaten him, but since he didn’t. I had to endure his poor puns.”

Fowl froze mid-stride and turned to where they were talking.

“Wait, you’re telling me I missed out on learning some new jokes?”

Cordellia groaned and used her foot to push the warrior inside the dimensional space.

“Gods, please don’t let him learn anymore,” she pleaded.

***

Sighing, Max closed the dimensional vault door and knew the organized stacks they had made would be destroyed after watching the eleven vorpal bunnies start playing jumping games the moment they got inside.

“Did you see the size of his wife?” Fowl asked once he knew they were safe from prying rabbit ears.

“For once… I agree with him,” Cordellia muttered. “She’s a beast.”

Max chuckled and nodded, motioning for everyone to gather close.

“Who knew she would be twice his size? And those teeth! They appear to be able to bite through a person’s neck.”

Their healer’s comment got a few head bobs as everyone moved to where Rakonath was resting.

“Time to go home. Make sure you’re touching me, or I’m going to guess you’ll find a new world to live on.”

No one laughed at his joke, and Max sighed.

[System Travel - Planetary]

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Their eyes quickly adjusted to the setting sun and saw that Tom had managed to keep the faction grounds from being destroyed.

Only a few members were walking the yard, and the moment they saw a silver dragon and a group of people appear, they took off running.

“I’ll be back in a couple. I need to get these two home.”

“Don’t stay long,” Tanila whispered as she kissed him. “You owe me.”

Everett bowed before Aerthen.

“It has been an honor. Perhaps one day you’ll be able to spend a little more time here and share some of that knowledge we discussed.”

“Maybe in a decade or two when I’m free from my current task,” she replied. “Surely you’ll still be around.”

“Unless that one gets me killed before then.”

Both of them laughed, and Max shook his head as the rest of his party made their way toward the main Faction building.”

“Let’s go,” Batrire called out. “If we don’t hurry, I’m certain an army will be here in a moment to fight off the great silver dragon.”

“At least you realize how powerful I am!” Rakonath shouted.

“He’s been hanging around that dwarf too much.”

Grinning, Max nodded at Aerthen and held out his hand, waiting for hers.

“Dwarves have a way of rubbing off on you,” he replied.

Putting his other hand on his dragon, Max watched as half a dozen adventurers poured from the two large doors of the Faction building.

“What are we waiting on?” Rakonath asked. “Me to get attacked?”

“Oh, just giving them a few more yards to get a good look at you before we leave. Trust me, it will make for a great story later.”

A low thrum came from Aerthen, and Max sensed her shape changing.

“If that is the case, then allow me to give them something to talk about.”

The sound of two dragons and the strongest fighter in the faction roared before flying low over the gates walls of the Golden Axe Faction.

***

Both dragons were still laughing as they appeared in the sky, high above the volcanic area below.

As they fell for a moment, gaining speed and using their wings to prepare for flight, Max maneuvered himself into position on Rakonath’s back, right up against his neck.

You seem to enjoy that spot. Thank you for not requiring me to ask.

Laughing, Max ignored the smell of the sulfur as both dragons made their way toward the opening, which was the entry point of Aerthen’s home.

The red dragon took her time, circling slowly, her head constantly checking every direction as she prepared to land on the stone platform that led inside.

She says we can land now.

As the immense body entered the opening, the silver dragon followed behind, coming to a very smooth landing.

Hopping down from his position, Max easily kept the set pace as Aerthen led the way.

“She’s disarming the traps?”

“Yes,” replied Rakonath with a slight thrum. “I’m not sure I would want to risk getting near the ones she placed. Each of them had more power than usual placed in them. Some are deeper inside, which could collapse a section of the mountain.”

“She fears that gold dragon that much?”

“I do not fear him!”

Her head was looking back at Max and for the first time in a while, he saw something in those gold eyes.

“You do not understand… perhaps cannot understand how I feel about his actions. What he desired was–”

“An unwilling mate.”

His words stopped Aerthen completely, and the smoke that had started billowing out of her nostrils stopped.

“I can only imagine how you felt, and it bothers me that you had to worry about yourself and Rakonath.”

“Did he tell you?”

Her voice seemed angry as she began to shrink, returning to the humanoid form she had spent more time in lately.

“I did not,” Rakonath proclaimed, his chest swelling some. “That was a promise I made and kept.”

“He didn’t have to. I often wondered,” Max said as he moved slowly to where she was standing. “I didn’t want to pry, but I figured that was most likely the real reason Kemruss came here. His coming for a smaller male dragon might only be because Rakonath was viewed as a potential threat for… you.”

Her hands shook, and the sharp nails ground against the red scales of her palm.

“I know your kind deals with the same thing. Many races do. Some female dragons have done the same to males, but I am not like that, nor will I lie down and allow that to happen to me. Forgive me for lying. I am not proud of my weakness.”

Max could feel the chasm between them even though he was only a few feet away.

“You aren’t weak at all. You’re one of the strongest dragons I’ve ever known, and don’t forget I’ve met the strongest dragon of all.”

Aerthen began to blink rapidly as she smiled, and a single tear formed briefly before evaporating.

“Sometimes I forget just how skilled you are with words, Max Hoste. Your woman is lucky to have a mate like you.”

Chuckling, he shook his head and just grinned.

“I’m not sure that’s always the case, but I’m glad for every minute I get to spend with her. Now tell me, what are your plans?”

Rakonath’s snout poked him in the back, and Max moved a little and scratched it.

“We’re going to fly toward the great waters. This youngling still has much to learn and explore. I know he has grown stronger, and soon, you should be able to take him with you on some hunts.”

“I am right here.”

A low growl came from Aerthen as she shook her head.

“While you think highly of yourself, do you truly believe that your power can stand against any of the creatures we avoided while we explored the other world? Could you face off against Kemruss and win?”

Max could feel the frustration that his dragon had at those questions. The displeasure of the answer all three knew was true seemed to stir a hornet's nest up inside Rakonath.

“I am not even a year old, yet we all know I am stronger than most would ever be at this age.”

“And yet that is nothing compared to true power. Tell me, who would win in a fight? Max or me?”

He stood there, his hand resting now on the silver scale he had been scratching, sensing the raging emotions within the young dragon’s body.

“Max would.”

“And he wouldn’t need to draw a weapon if you two fought. The fact that he can gently touch you and scratch as he does without injuring you is a sign of real power. Surely you have seen how he and Tanila touch each other, and only once have I seen him hurt her, frustration and anger finally overcoming the control that he has.”

A twinge of pain pierced his heart as Max recalled that moment she was talking about. It took effort, and yet he had learned just how much strength to use. Occasionally, he didn’t guess someone's power and killed them with a single strike or blow, yet with Tanila and his friends, he knew exactly how to touch them.

“I have… we have discussed this before. Why bring it up now? Why before him?”

“Because you both need to see the difference in power!” Aerthen shouted, moving to where Rakonath’s snout was and bonking him on it.

His head snapped back and a growl came from the silver dragon that caught Max a little off guard.

“You’re angry! Good! You need to be angry, and you need to be ready to listen and obey because like Max, there are many things out there far more powerful than either of us. He wasn’t a coward for leaving that planet and those who lived there behind! One day you might need to escape and leave me if that means you can survive. Do you understand?”

Max wanted to say something, yet Bob's calm presence held him back.

These are dragon things. Much like a father might tell you if someone attacks the house, your job is to allow your mother and sister to get away to safety. Even if it means death for him first and you second.

But… does she really believe they are in danger?

Every day we are all in danger. Part of me is glad Zogooruth came. It reminded us both that we are nothing in this system. As she is telling your dragon, we have a lot of growing to do. Aerthen is doing this because she is trying to tell you the same thing without being direct about it.

He sighed once and then chuckled.

“Thank you. I needed that lesson.”

Aerthen’s lips slipped, and a smile appeared for a second before her stoic face returned.

“I’m not certain what you mean, but if the lesson Rakonath needs to learn is one that you need as well, then perhaps I have not wasted my breath at all.”

Moving closer to his dragon, Max motioned for him to lower his head.

“She loves you. Never forget that. Go and learn from her, and I will find you. If you need me, call. I will blaze a trail across the sky as I follow the thread that binds us.”

Nuzzling Max, Rakonath thrummed for a moment.

“Perhaps next time, she can hit you instead.”

Links

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[L1] https://www.royalroadcdn.com/public/covers-large/the-myth-seekers-a-lit-rpg-fantasy-adventure-aadavdmh5hy.jpg?time=1745000923

[L2] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/114696/the-myth-seekers-a-litrpg-fantasy-adventure

[L3]

39/445a(1) Chapter 445a - Games Played 1)

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2271350/chapter-445a-games-played;39/445a(1[this.Waybak2025-05-12 14:14],[Wayback_first],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-12 14:13],[this.word2025-05-12 14:36],[publish2025-05-11 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-11 15:02])Chapter 445a - Games Played - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road

Chapter 445a - Games Played

“So it’s been done?”

“As per your request, yes. He should no longer be traveling to that planet anymore.”

The slightest grunt came as Wekime bobbed his head once and then moved a piece on the game board before him. Hundreds of boards, each with thousands of spots, were connected. Some pieces vanished while new ones appeared. Occasionally, some seemed to defy logic, appearing on multiple boards simultaneously before disappearing from them all, only to make a new entrance somewhere else.

One piece held his complete attention, as it had since the moment he had marked it.

A solid black stone shape of the man they called Max Hoste.

“You’ve made more moves than I can remember in so long.”

“Says a friend that we both know never stops.”

The being next to him was swirling in the void, its presence held in check only because they were in a domain both had agreed to be in.

“My child was more than happy to enjoy a free meal. Still, part of me had wished this one had fought. It seems you know him better than I expected.”

“Young… so young and yet so powerful and with so much potential,” Wekime stated as he waved a finger in the air and a piece dozens of boards over moved. “He cannot begin to imagine his potential.”

“You mean the threat he poses. To everything, including ourselves.”

Turning slowly, both gods faced each other.

Each had been there the day everything had begun. Both were part of the nine who had seen it all.

“Do you believe that? Tell me, does time even matter? All these pieces and boards, how many times has the game been almost completely wiped out only to restart again?”

“More than either of us would like to count.”

“Hogroothu, we have been allies most of our days. Occasionally, we have not, but we both understand balance and order, even when you are the lord of the void.”

A deep chuckle came, and a stone finger wagged in the air, sending another piece in motion.

“Tell me, Wekime, why this one? After so many?”

Sighing, the gold dragon turned his attention back to the boards and tapped his scaled jaw with a claw, eyes always scanning everything he could see.

“Because for the first time, I believe one of them may finally upset the balance we have so long tried to keep. And perhaps it is time.”

Links

//[2025-05-12 14:36]

[None]

40/446(1) Chapter 446 - The Tower Awaits

Next Chapter: 2025-05-12 15:02 [2025-05-12 14:16] 1)
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Chapter 446 - The Tower Awaits

A soft groan came from Tanila as Max’s fingers worked the knots in her shoulders.

“You’ve gotten far too good at that, my love,” she purred.”Keep that up, and you’ll be forced out of adventuring and made to do this full-time.”

Smiling, he leaned forward and kissed the back of her neck, his nostrils filling with the scent of her hair that hung over the front of her bare chest.

“As much as we both might like that, I think other duties will eventually require us to do other things. I can feel our child moving more.”

“Which, by the way, is not fair at all! I can sense them and feel them, but you still haven’t told me if it will be a boy or a girl.”

“Because I don’t know. Bob won’t tell me, and a wall blocks it in my mind. Anytime I might know, he takes it away because I don’t want to spoil it.”

She grunted and then moaned as his fingers worked a spot that was always tight.

“I’m just glad there wasn’t any vorpal rabbit on the menu tonight.”

Laughing, Tanila nodded.

“Those… bunnies. I feel for Jazzjak’s wife. She is a strong woman to control them as she does.”

Max wrapped his arms around her and pulled her close, kissing her neck again.

“You’re tired and need to rest. I need to get to work if I’m going to make things for us. Besides, tomorrow we’ll start the 60th floor in the tower.”

A shiver ran down Tanila’s exposed back, and as she clutched at his arms for a moment, he could sense some reservation.

“It’s… hard to believe we’re there. I mean… just a year ago, we managed to reach level twenty-five. Now…”

“Soon, we’ll be much higher. For now, rest. I know you’re tired.”

He felt her lips against his arm, and then she patted both of them softly.

“Go… I know your mistress is calling to you, and I am tired.”

Laughing, he moved till her face was before his and drew her close, kissing those soft red lips, ignoring the desire that welled up inside him to spend more time as they just had.

“She is a demanding mistress,” he replied. “But if I recall, she was thinking about having me make you something.”

Rolling her eyes, Tanila flopped down on the bed and used her hand to shoo him away.

“Go and have fun. Tell Tom I said hi again.”

***

“Gods, Max, you’ve brought back quite a load of items.”

Nodding, he continued to pull out a few chests that would not be stored in the guild vault and allowed the Faction trainer to inspect them.

“I’m focused on a few things, and I want to try to finish them. In my mind, I’ve got some ideas but getting them made is going to be the hard part.”

“Something better than the staff you made, Batrire?”

He could see the look on Tom’s face and just shrugged.

“Each time it’s different. Like in my mind, an idea springs to life, and I know I can make it.”

A large block of green metal appeared in the trainer’s hand, and then almost fell to the floor for a second before Tom caught it.

“What in the gods is this?!”

“Something perfect for a hammer or perhaps some armor. Jazzjak knows the name of many of these materials.”

A snort came, and Tom quickly stored the metal.

“You bring back enough items to destroy the market completely and thirteen rabbits, which I know two can easily bite my head off. We’ll ignore the other eleven who act worse than a teenager.”

“Still, all they want is to be safe. Surely, we can find them a place in our world for that.”

Nodding, Tom began to peer through the chest Max had been waiting for.

“Power cores? Like the one you put in Dexic’s sword?”

“Yup, and those all have more power than that one.”

Whistling, the trainer held one in his hand, admiring the light that reflected off its glossy outside.

“I don’t suppose I could put in a personal request.”

Without hesitating, Max pulled two swords out, each with a pink blade slightly longer than his arm. The grip was perfect, and he knew it. Flipping them around and holding it out, he waited.

“For me?”

“For you.”

It only took a second before Tom took the first one, and his eyes lit up, and Max was informed that he had inspected it. The second sword caused the same reaction and a grin stretched across the older man’s face.

“You… when… I mean, thank you!”

“I didn’t want you to think I only love Everett. So I made you something I knew you would enjoy.”

The look of utter joy was written all over his face. Often, it only displayed frowns as he carried out his job as the Faction trainer. Now his lips were curled upward, and if his cheeks rose any higher, they might fall off. Every few seconds, his head would bob up and down as he inspected each sword over and over.

“These… are way beyond what I could ever have hoped for. You’re certain?”

“Absolutely. Perhaps one day I’ll make something better–”

“Better?” Tom croaked. “Each sword gives me 50 points in Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution! That’s a hundred points for each of those three attributes when combined! Surely, you must be joking.”

Max’s only reply was a shrug as he patted his friend's shoulder and motioned at the forge waiting for him.

“Play with them later. I need some help, and you’re the only one allowed in here.”

Laughing, Tom gave each of them a playful swing once more before sighing and storing them.

“Fine… I’ll wait till tomorrow… but if you keep giving me things like this, I might actually be able to take you.”

Rolling his eyes, Max shook his head.

“We both know that day will never come.”

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Max watched as each member of his party shuddered the moment they appeared on the tower floor after him.

“What was that?” Cordellia asked as she shook her arms. “Like a–”

Each of them was staring ahead at the space before them, eyes darting around at the figure seated on a black stone chair.

“Who… who is that?” Batrire whispered, not mentioning anything about where they were seated.

Every inch of the fifty-yard square room was made of precious metal, almost making it seem worthless as a being with no face and just a silver chrome body sat there.

It was easily twenty feet while sitting, and the blank, shiny surface where eyes and a mouth should be was focused upon them.

A deep voice echoed off the gold floors and walls.

“Congratulations are in order. You five have achieved a feat that most will never manage to accomplish. Please sit and listen while I tell you what lies beyond this floor.”

A silver hand that shone like a gleaming mirror gestured to a spot before it, and five stone chairs like the one it sat on rose up.

“Uh… I guess we sit?” Fowl asked.

Max nodded and moved first.

It’s… strong… like…

Nothing we would ever fight. It is probably something brought here by the system like Wekime and the demon we faced in that dungeon. I can… remember something, but I'm not sure what.

Every step felt like they were being measured, and the lack of a face on the one speaking to them made it hard to pick up on any visual cues. The muscular humanoid shape returned its arm to the spot on the throne.

When all five were seated, it snapped its finger and the image of their world appeared before them.

"This is your home planet, and it appears you five have all… somehow left it. Not a feat I can recall happening before on this world. The scent of… something powerful… ancient is present, yet I cannot recall what it is, even though I should know."

Slowly, the figure leaned forward, towering above them and appeared to be glancing at each of them individually.

"No matter. Your travels are not the reason for this moment; perhaps it will make what I say easier to understand. Know that what we discuss will be a secret. Any attempts to talk about it outside of this area or with anyone who has not yet stepped foot on this floor will result in pain."

A thick tree trunk appeared in its left hand off to the side, and the sound of crushed fibers rang out.

"At first, it will hurt like someone is squeezing the very life from you, and even though you won't be able to speak of it, you'll experience this pain in a way that should remind you to stop. If you decide to keep trying…"

The sound of the tree exploding as shards of wood flew in every direction, striking a barrier that suddenly had appeared and prevented the pieces from striking them.

"This is simply an image to drive home what will happen to you. Do you understand?"

Gulps came from some of them as they nodded.

"Good. Now, this floor starts the real challenge. What you thought was difficult on the 51st floor was simply a test. It was designed to make the weak quit. Those who are not up for what comes next will never have the chance to achieve what lies beyond."

"What… what does lie beyond?" their ranger asked.

The mirrored face turned to Cordellia who seemed to shrink under the focus of its attention.

"Godhood."

Grunts and gasps came as everyone looked at each other, eyes wide and mouths hanging open.

"You're serious? Godhood?" Fowl asked.

“Jokes are not something I tell. I do not find emotion to be worthy of my time. Stories and rumors have spread across your world for thousands of years. Defeat the tower, and you will have the chance to become a god. Like the three you worship. Just know…”

Its right hand motioned to an area where the room began to change. Dirt replaced the gold, and thousands of grave markers appeared.

“So many have died trying to become one. Few have made it. Most are not worthy or strong enough to do what must be done for it. Perhaps one of you will be worthy.”

“One of us?” Max asked the little warnings he had been given from Phaius going off in his head.

“All things are revealed in time. That is not what I am here to show you for now.”

It snapped its finger, and a small gold pedestal began to rise before each of them.

Once it had stopped forming, a blue gem, a color darker than any Max had ever seen, appeared on each of them.

“Take that, crush it, feel what comes next.”

As one they did as instructed, almost unable to resist the command.

It was cold, like water from a cold stream, similar to the one he had dunked under while fleeing from his home a year ago.

Each edge of the gem felt perfectly smooth, yet inside was a well of power that Max knew he wanted.

Crushing it sent a surge of power through his arm.

[Tower Achievement Acquired]

[60th Floor Reached]

[Gem Experience Granted]

[Automatic Tower Experience given per floor]

[Stat Bonus Granted]

[+5% to all stats]

[Aura has been unlocked]

As the power rushed through him, Max immediately felt the increase that came.

That was… amazing!

True power lies beyond. We will be wise to stay here as much as we can.

“Five percent,” Batrire whispered. “I got five percent.”

“Me too,” Cordellia said.

“Ditto.”

Tanila chuckled and nodded, and the rest turned their attention to Max.

“I got the same,” he stated with a grin.

“Yes, the tower has granted you all the same boon. Just know what you think about this place will be tested. The floors will not be like what you expect.”

A question burned inside and Max wanted to ask, yet wondered if doing so might cause problems for everyone else.

Ask it. We may never get another chance.

Clearing his throat, Max looked up and saw his own reflection in the being's face.

“The floors that are coming. Are they all beings from other worlds?”

A tremor ran through the room, and the very floor shook, causing their chairs to vibrate as whatever god or being this was bent down, stopping only a few yards from where Max sat.

“That question… it is one most do not figure out till much later. You–”

Suddenly, the being seemed to freeze, and its head twitched slightly from side to side.

As quickly as it had bent over, it returned to the position it had been in when they first arrived—seated upright on its throne, looking straight ahead.

“Our time is done. Know that choices must be made. Those who think they are wise will learn that not all choices are easy and sometimes the cost of them will have consequences that last eons.”

A loud snapping sound came, and the room pulsed with a bright white light.

Each of them blinked, and Max immediately sensed the change in where they had been, now in a forest, the sounds of animals and the sweet scent of trees and flowers reaching his nose.

“What… where are we?” Fowl asked, jumping from his seat.

“In the tower,” Max replied. “It’s time to see what it has in store for us.”

Links

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41/447(1) Chapter 447 - The First Test

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https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2276298/chapter-447-the-first-test;**41/447(1[this.Waybak2025-05-13 15:04],[Wayback_first2025-05-13 15:04],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-13 15:02],[this.word2025-05-13 15:05],[publish2025-05-13 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-13 15:02])Chapter 447 - The First Test - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1,L2]

Chapter 447 - The First Test

“This reminds me of one of the forests back home,” Cordellia said as she placed a hand against the smooth bark. “Each of these trees feels… magical.”

Tall trees stretched upward over two hundred feet, their tops swaying slightly with a breeze that carried the sound and the scent of a proper forest.

“She’s right,” Tanila stated. “If you look at these and how close they are together, it’s not like the other forests we have fought in.”

His sonar was detecting everything possible, and nothing felt out of place. Still, Max couldn’t shake the feeling of concern that wanted to overwhelm him.

That being… what they said.

It appears the tower is going to prove whatever point it has. If I didn’t know any better, I would almost wonder if…

Bob’s thoughts matched up with what he had been wondering.

“Guys, I need to check something. You can hide in my dimensional storage, or Fowl can keep everyone near him.”

“What are you planning on doing?”

Smiling at Batrire, he pointed upward.

“This doesn’t *feel* like the tower. I never felt like the tower wasn’t… real, but somehow everything here is… how it should be. The way it smells, how the wind blows, the noise of the leaves and animals. All of those things are how a forest should

be. All the other floors we've been on had elements of that but not all of them together."

He could see Tanila's eyes widen.

"You think we're on a different world?"

"Yes and no. If we were, I'd expect to have received a message about being on a new one. That is what made me think this was just another floor. Yet Bob and I were talking, and we felt it was not a level. What if there are worlds for each floor but not actual worlds?"

"Uh… a world not being a world? Like cheese not being cheese?"

Smiling, Max shrugged at Fowl.

"It sounds weird I know, but trust me on this. So what do you want to do? Stay here or get into the dimensional space?"

"My opinion is we take the safe place. No point worrying about something jumping out of the woods and attacking while you're wherever you are. Not that I don't think I could take a hit or two but…"

Seeing how his friend was acting, Max nodded and summoned his dimensional vault and allowed them to all go inside.

"I'll be right back. Sit tight."

A groan came from their healer as Fowl laughed before the door closed.

The moment they were safe, Max bent down and jumped into the air, letting Bob use the wind magic to propel him higher.

Up into the sky, past the tops of the trees, he could look out and see the vast space beneath them. A thick forest was all around them. A few spots in the woods showed an empty place between the trees, and further away, in another direction, was what looked like a possible town with buildings and a small river next to it.

Higher and higher he flew, starting to sense the cold air and how it got thinner.

A tower floor would normally not allow us to go this high. Does this mean this is really a world? A pocket world?

He could sense Bob working through some things as they slowly spun around, watching the terrain change from trees to a mountain range far off in the distance.

A pocket world… It makes sense that something like the tower could have them. Still if this is the typical part of the tower, it would explain why it took so long for parties to conquer the floors.

From his vantage point, Max could see that if they had gone in one direction, it would take weeks to reach the area with the mountains while only needing about four days to find the area that looked like a town.

Summoning his dimensional storage, he beckoned for them to come close.

“Don’t lean out and fall, but take a look.”

Fowl let out a slight groan as he glanced downward from the opening.

“We’re… awfully high. A little warning next time?”

Seeing that his friend appeared a little green, Max nodded.

“So this really doesn’t feel like a tower floor,” Tanila stated. “All the other ones we’ve been on didn’t look like this.”

Moving to sit on the edge of the ledge, he shrugged and pointed in two different directions.

“I’ve never seen a tower floor as large as this one or was able to go this high. Part of me is glad you thought the same thing.”

“Wait, you both believe this isn’t like all the others?” Cordellia asked. “As in…”

“I’m not sure,” Max replied. “It could be a world or perhaps just something designed for the tower. The options seem… limitless, I guess.”

“In what way?” Batrire asked as she shuffled over to where he was on her rear, letting her legs dangle out over the edge.

“My love… please be careful,” Fowl protested. “That’s a long fall.”

“Bah, he won’t let me die. Stop being a chicken, and come sit by me.”

Shaking his head, their warrior kept a few feet between himself and the entrance of the dimensional space.

Their healer turned back to Max and motioned for him to talk.

“When I asked that… being the question of different worlds, I felt like it surprised them. After talking with Bob, we’re both certain these floors aren’t like the others. All of you could sense the aura coming off the others, right?”

“Only yours at the moment, but I think it has to do with your dimensional space,” Batrire replied.

“True, but Dagon and some of his Guard had the same aura, which leads me to believe they all have reached this tower floor. Only those who have achieved this level would have it. And he couldn’t talk about it, which seems to go along with what we were told.”

“So this is really the big gap in the tower, not the 51st,” Tanila muttered. “We all noticed the difference in power of the creatures we faced. If that’s the case, we should expect what’s coming next to be worse?”

“Stronger for sure. I’m more interested in knowing what we’ll be facing. Learning from Igarra’s tower that the system uses other worlds to put what we face here creates a lot of problems. Still that means we’ll need to find the exit and figure out what we’re in store for.”

“Are you wanting to fight or just look for the exit?”

Cordellia’s question was a good one, and Max tried to get a read off of everyone else.

“What do you all think?”

“I just want to be back on the ground,” Fowl muttered. “I doubt whatever we face will give you trouble, but if you want, I’m always up for bashing something.”

The rest all nodded and with no one wanting to make a decision, he dropped off the ledge, letting Bob keep him afloat and motioned for them to move back.

“I’ll scout some more and then let you know what I find. In the meantime, I’ll make sure you’re all safe.”

As they all moved deeper into his dimensional space, Tanila blew him a kiss.

“Be safe and don’t have too much fun.”

Chuckling, Max blew her a kiss back and grinned.

“Imagine having fun in the tower.”

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[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill is lower rank than current skill]

[Power stored for future use]

That thing was far weaker than I expected.

His sword had cleaved the half goat, half man in half without trying, leaving what looked like a legless man and a headless goat. The other ten that had been with it died to the lightning Bob sent out in a single blast.

Yes. It would appear Fowl was right. These are no match. And the skills from each of them are worthless.

Flicking the blood off his blade, he picked up one-half of the creature and stored it, trying to ignore the musky scent that it gave off.

This is the third pack we’ve faced, and they are all aggressive. Even when I call out to them, none of them stop their approach.

A few did seem surprised at first, but then again, who expects their opponent to baah as you did.

We’re closing in on the city area. I guess we can stop killing these and just see what is there.

Launching upward into the sky, Max stayed closer to the tree tops, watching as different colored birds and other animals flew off as he passed by, causing the tree tops to bend from the speed at which he flew.

Soon, the treeline vanished, and he saw the town drawing near and activated stealth, hiding as he reached the outer edge of the forest, hovering in midair.

Below him was an open space with a long winding stream that ran through a town with a lot of activity. An entire city filled with these creatures were working in fields, drawing water, and the other sounds of life one would suspect from a place like this. Stone and wood buildings were intermingled, with a twenty-foot wall surrounding the city's actual part. Occasionally, he could make out guards who traveled in packs of six or more, all jogging along the road, weapons and armor bouncing as they moved.

There are children down there…

A twinge of something came from Bob, and both of them saw the groups of smaller half-goats and half-humans running and kicking a ball, yelling and shouting as they played a game.

Could the tower really want us to kill all of them?

I'm unsure what the tower wants, but our introduction told us that your decisions will have consequences. Killing all of them could destroy a race. Not removing them might allow them to develop into something more. Peaceful? Aggressive? Neither of which I'm certain of.

Frowning, Max felt the pain of uncertainty.

If I tell the others, then they are forced into being part of a decision that might haunt all of them. I would much rather bear the burden of this choice. Especially Tanila.

You plan on trying to talk with them again. Even after all the other times, has it failed?

That was in the woods. Here, it appears they are prepared to fight, but if pressed and they see that nothing they do can injure me, perhaps they would be more open to discussion.

And if they aren't?

Then, I will kill only those I must and look for the portal.

Sensing Bob's acceptance of his decision, Max descended to the ground and broke stealth.

Without bringing out his weapon or shield, he slowly approached the town, moving through the vineyards set up on the outer edges.

A loud bleat came and soon he could see a group of armored goatmen coming toward him, weapons drawn as they charged. A city bell began to ring out in the distance where the town was.

"Wait! I do not want to fight!"

"All intruders must die!" one shouted back, and the pack came at him, ignoring the damage they were doing to the crops, their swords and axes hacking up the food they had planted.

Blades came at him, and Max simply deflected them with his hands, watching as none of them even cut him.

Over and over the blows landed, and after about twenty seconds of just standing there, letting their strikes reach him, he saw two of them come from opposite sides, their weapons glowing for a second as each swung in unison.

Bob's hesitation was there, but with his hands outstretched, he parried both, watching as the blades shattered against his palms.

"I told you I don't want to fight!"

His tone and what had just happened to the last attack caused the group of seven to all take a few steps back.

"Who are you?! Why have you come?! You cannot have our young ones!"

The look on the goat-man who had spoken felt off.

He's older... a bit of grey in his beard. And I think he's actually fearful of me.

"I don't want your young ones. I just want–"

"Lies!"

One of the goatmen behind him came from behind, its large axe coming at his neck.

Sighing, Max didn't bother even to deflect it, letting the blade strike him and watching as it bounced off harmlessly.

"I don't want to fight because if I do, you'll all die. All I want is the portal that lets me leave."

"He speaks our tongue," one of the men next to the older one said. "How?"

A shushing sound came as the grey-bearded goat-man slowly moved toward him.

"Who are you and why are you here?"

"The tower brought me here, and I am Max. My party and I have come to complete–"

"The tower? It brought you here?"

Nodding slowly, his sonar told him everyone appeared anxious, weapons trembling as the few remaining ones pointed at him.

"All who come from the tower only come to kill. Yet you claim not to want that, and you speak our language. Why should we believe you?"

Max smiled, sensing that one of these goats had a lick of intelligence.

"Allow me to show you."

Bob started to laugh inside his head as he lifted upward off the ground and his bow appeared in his hand.

Drawing it back, he aimed it at a tree.

[Empowered Ranged Attack]

The glowing arrow that had formed out of nothing streaked from the weapon he had crafted and impacted one of the trees at the edge of the clearing. To say its base exploded would have been an understatement as the arrow shattered it and the next four it hit, causing a display of destruction as trees began to topple over.

All the goatmen under him began to back away further, obviously now understanding where they stood compared to his power.

Slowly descending, Max stored his weapon and faced the grey-bearded goat.

“As you can see, killing you wouldn’t be a problem. Had I wanted to do that, I would not have bothered to try and talk.”

“I… I see that. Would you be willing to remain here while we summon our elder?”

Sensing that for once, someone might come and not require him to wipe out everyone before him, Max nodded.

A chair appeared in his hand, and he took a seat.

“I can wait.”

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Links

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[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/116308/rebirth-of-the-immortal/chapter/2272274/chapter-2-rebirth

[L2] https://www.royalroadcdn.com/public/covers-large/rebirth-of-the-immortal-aabaiywwaxc.jpg?time=1746991205

42/448 Chapter 448 - A Choice Made

Next Chapter: 2025-05-14 15:02

[2025-05-13 15:06] 1)
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2278683/chapter-448-a-choice-made;**42/448(1[this.Waybak2025-05-15 10:14],[word.Waybak2025-05-15 10:14],[Wayback_first2025-05-15 10:14],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-15 10:12],[this.word2025-05-15 10:14],[publish2025-05-14 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-14 15:02])Chapter 448 - A Choice Made - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**

Chapter 448 - A Choice Made

The silence had been a bit awkward, yet Max never flinched. The three who remained with the greybeard stood there studying him.

His attempts at talking were cut off with a grunt and a single apology that they were not allowed to speak now that the elder was coming.

Minutes passed, and soon, a ten-foot goat-man, towering three feet over the rest, was approaching him. Even without the added height, the red hair and skin stood out compared to the tan or dark skin and hair.

His horns were twice as large as the rest, curling almost twice, and black eyes locked on the man standing in the vineyard's torn-up section.

Behind him came a dozen white-skinned and haired goat women, each wearing almost nothing on their upper half and all with staffs that seemed to sparkle in the light of the day.

Based on their frowns, I’m not certain any of them are happy to see me.

While everything we know is speculation, they believe it's killed or be killed. You haven’t been injured by any of their attacks, which tells them that it wouldn’t be a fight if they forced one. Happy or not, they didn’t have a choice.

Slowly, the group slowed down and the twelve goatwomen spread out around him as the elder approached.

“Word has reached me that you speak our language and do not seek our deaths. Forgive me if we find this hard to believe. All those who have come before you slaughter our kind without care.”

“I’m not like them,” Max replied, studying the musclebound elder. There was no fat on his body, and he ignored the comments Fowl would have made, already knowing that roasted goat meat smelled wonderful. “All I seek is the exit to this place. A portal.”

“We know of what you seek… tell me… why have you chosen not to slaughter us?”

The elder pointed to the area of the woods where trees had fallen over. “It is obvious that you could easily do such a thing.”

“Because I prefer not to kill if I don’t have to. If your warriors hadn’t stopped their attacks, I would have crippled a few and continued my approach to your village. The entire time I would have sought peace, but if anyone had managed to draw blood, I would have not hesitated to retaliate.”

A bleat from behind him came, and his sonar told him that one of the goatwomen had lowered her staff and pointed it at him.

“She can try, but as I said, if she manages to draw blood, there will be nothing left of her body when I’m done.”

Max’s tone was harsh, and he glared, forgoing the softer facial expression he had tried to hold.

With a wave of his hand, the elder shook his head, and the staff slowly pointed upward.

“You knew what she was doing even without looking… your aura is weak and yet… it isn’t. Tell me, warrior, if I promise to show you the portal and do no harm, will you swear to harm none of my people?”

“I will make that promise, but you must also understand that I have others with me who won’t attack either. If any of your people were foolish enough to attempt to attack a single one of them…” Max paused and leaned forward as his tone became gruff. “I’ll burn this entire town to the ground and promise none shall live, even if I have to burn down the entire forest around us.”

He could sense the trembling of a few guards taking a couple of steps back.

“No one will attack yours. I, Ruuchalb, swear on my life.”

With those words, he pulled a dagger off the leather belt at his waist and made a mark on his horn, causing the other goatmen to gasp.

“Then I will abide by our agreement.”

With a nod, the twelve women raced off, heading toward the city.

“Come, walk with me. I am curious about what makes you different from the others we have faced.”

Together they walked slowly as Max felt Ruuchalb relax slightly.

“How many have you faced here?”

“In this place?”

“Do you travel a lot or stay here?”

A grunt came as the elder snatched a ripe bunch of purple grapes off a vine and plopped a few in his mouth before holding the food out to Max.

Taking them and trying a few, the sweetness of the fruit was surprising and with a grin, Max took a few more before handing it back.

“We have been in this place for a while. Not many have come and the few that made it past our patrols in the woods did not breach our walls. Still, we have lost many, and there have been moments when the trees became our home before we could rebuild.”

Both of Ruuchalb’s shoulders slumped for a moment at that last statement.

“Are those you face all like me? I mean in appearance?”

Chuckling, the elder shook his head.

“No, many different kinds come, all trying to prove their strength. Some like you, pointy ear folks, short and hairy ones, as well as non-hair ones. Many are creatures like ourselves. They are often harder to fight as they know how to use the woods and tactics, making it difficult to pin them down.

“Still, we have faced many challenges in the time of our people. One day, I hope to return to our home and prove we have protected that which we have sworn to defend.”

“The portal?”

A deep guttural grunt came and Ruuchalb frowned.

“Yes… you will be the first in a while to reach it. Only twice before has anyone managed to access and use it. Each of those times was… costly.”

“Can you tell me what you get from defending this? What if you die?”

“That… I cannot. Our home…” Ruuchalb paused and the pained look Max recognized began to form.

“Don’t force yourself to endure the pain. I understand. Somethings are not allowed to be spoken of.”

Chuckling, the elder nodded and slowly started to smile.

“You are different. Much different than all the others. For a smooth skin with no hair, I am impressed with your power and your mind. Surely, you could have easily killed all of us and taken everything we have. Knowing that… having heard of what you did and then seeing it… It made me realize that perhaps my god had found me lacking and sent someone to punish me.”

“No one sent me,” Max replied. “I”m simply trying to complete–”

The words seemed to catch in his throat, and no matter how much he tried to say it, he couldn’t

It would appear you have found what you cannot talk about in here.

A chuckle from Bob echoed in his head as he shrugged.

“Let’s just say I have my own reasons for finding that portal.”

Both of them nodded and said nothing else as they drew close to the outer city.

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Every goat-man, woman, or child was gone, except the occasional guard standing along the path Ruuchalb was leading him. In the center of the town was a simple-looking tent, but Max could sense power coming from inside it.

Coming to stop about thirty yards from it was a circle of crystal, six inches thick and forming a perfect ring around the tent.

“We cannot enter it. We are not allowed. If you had crossed this boundary, none of my people could have followed you.”

Bending down, Max reached out with his hand and felt the power that tingled yet did nothing to him.

“May I?”

Nodding, Ruuchalb motioned to it.

“I am still interested in when your friends will arrive. Was this simply a story to strike fear in our hearts in case we decided to attack?”

Chuckling, he shook his head and stepped over the ring and then summoned his dimensional space.

And nothing happened.

[Dimensional Access Blocked]

What in the gods… it’s blocked?

So this might not be good. It appears the tower has ways to stop people like yourself.

Returning to the other side of the crystal ring, Max saw the look Ruuchalb was giving him.

This time his dimensional space opened up and the elder took a few steps back in surprise when the other four came to the doorway.

“You… have them with you? Hidden? A secret place?”

Bobbing his head, Max beckoned for his friends.

“It’s safe, don’t attack, and we can go.”

Fowl came out first, decked out in full armor and keeping himself between the others and the red goat-man that towered over him.

“What’s he saying?” their warrior asked.

“You need to go over the ring, and we can take the portal.”

“You’re sure it's not a trap?”

“Completely. After all, you’ll go first, and if something is wrong and I don’t hear from you with our ring, I’ll burn this entire village down.”

“I swear! They will be fine!” Ruuchalb proclaimed, waving his large hands in the air. “I swore on my horn and bare the mark! To break it would cause it to fall off.”

Fowl glanced at Max and the goat-man, who was making animal noises in various tones.

As he started to open his mouth, a wooden staff bonked their warrior in the helm.

“Don’t. Let’s go. Max has this.”

Grumbling, Fowl gave a slight bow and backed up until he passed the crystal ring with the others.

“Go, I’ll be there in a moment.”

In his inventory, Max found what he was looking for, and a bottle of wine that was over two hundred gold appeared in his hand.

“I’m guessing your people enjoy drinking the fruit you grow?”

A smile bigger than the sun appeared on Ruuchalb’s lips.

“More than you know!”

“Then take this as a gift. I pray your god knows you have done the best thing possible for his people. May you one day be able to return home.”

Carefully, the elder held the clear glass bottle with the dark red liquid inside and swished it around.

“Our skins do not have this kind of feel and the color is very beautiful. You’re certain you want to give me this?”

Max nodded and held out his hand.

“Where I am from, we shake hands and sometimes offer gifts. Thank you for keeping your word.”

Ruuchalb quickly grabbed Max’s hand and started to laugh as they stood there, shaking each other for a moment.

“Who would have believed it?! One who seeks peace and offers the drink of our god! Be safe, warrior, and know that I shall tell all my people of your kindness. Tell me, what is your name?”

“Max Hoste.”

Bending down onto one knee, Ruuchalb bowed low.

“Be safe then, warrior Max Hoste. May you protect yours and may the vine's fruit provide the strength you need to pass any obstacle.”

With a slight nod, Max turned and moved past the crystal barrier, still able to sense that the elder had not yet risen.

You have a way with people… and goats… if such a thing is possible.

Unable to help himself, Max started to laugh as he went to the tent and found a swirling blue portal inside.

We need to catch up. No telling what trouble Fowl is getting into.

An icy chill touched his skin as the world shifted, and Max felt the cold immediately, even though it didn't bother him.

When his vision cleared up, large mountains covered in snow were before them, a single pass leading up into them.

"It's about time," their warrior muttered. "My balls are about to turn blue from how cold this is."

Tanila held up a finger and pointed behind him. Twenty yards away was a portal.

"If we take it, does it lock us out?" Max asked.

"Beats me," Cordellia muttered, her teeth clattering together, pulling a thick fur cloak around herself. "All I know is it's far colder than I expected."

Frowning, he tried to figure out what to do.

Do we keep going or pull out?

I'm assuming we'll keep going, as you've never been one to pull out.

Links

//[2025-05-15 10:14]

[none]

43/449 Chapter 449 - Rewards Earned

Next Chapter: 2025-05-15 15:02

[2025-05-15 10:12] 1)
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2281064/chapter-449-rewards-earned;**43/449(1[this.Waybak2025-05-15 15:05],[word.Waybak2025-05-15 15:05],[Wayback_first2025-05-15 15:05],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-15 15:03],[this.word2025-05-15 15:05],[publish2025-05-15 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-15 15:02])Chapter 449 - Rewards Earned - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**

Chapter 449 - Rewards Earned

Max looked down as he took a few steps forward from where everyone was standing, moving toward the tall mountain pass that eventually disappeared into the clouds.

Along the snow-covered surface, a ring of energy radiated outward from it. Bending down, he used his hand to clear a path from what he sensed.

“What is it?” Fowl asked as he approached.

“A crystal ring like the one at the end of the previous floor… It feels… different.”

“In what way?”

Touching it with his fingers, Max felt a jolt of pain run through his body, similar to the sensation he had felt on the 50th floor.

That’s interesting.

Flicking his hand even though it didn’t physically hurt, he reached out with the other one slowly and stopped as notifications appeared.

[Tower Floor 61 Reached]

[Completion of Tower Floor 60 Achieved]

[Full Level of Tower Experience Granted]

[Calculating Results of Previous Floor]

[…]

[…]

[Results Totaled]

[Time Spent on Floor is within Top 3]

[Number of Kills on Floor is Rank 1]

[Calculating Rewards]

[Rewards for Achieving Top 3 Fastest Time]

[Full Level Experience Granted & Skill Gem]

[Error - Experience denied]

[No Replacement given for lost experience]

[Determining Skill Gem based on current skills]

[…]

[…]

[Current Skills are varied. Special Gem Given]

[Skill Gem Granted - Epic Rank - Random Skill Granted upon use]

[Rewards for Rank 1 of least number of kills]

[Crafting Item - Legendary Gem of Healing]

[Potion - Elixir of Stats]

“Holy elf tits,” Max muttered, watching as a large green gem, a purple gem, and a golden potion all appeared at his feet.

“What in the gods?” Cordellia asked, her voice slightly higher than usual.

“Rewards… for passing the floor so fast and with so few kills.”

“Uh, do we all get some?” Fowl asked as he inched closer to where Max was.

“I think. Touch the circle.”

Each of them moved forward, and their warrior went first, slightly grunting as his fingertips touched the circle.

Soon, three items, all similar to Max’s, appeared on the snow.

A whoop came from Fowl, who motioned to the others, and they all quickly did the same.

“A whole level of experience,” Tanila said quietly. “That’s… insane.”

“All because we didn’t kill anything and made it through quickly?”

Wincing, Max shook his head.

“I did kill a few, just not that many. Still, I wonder what group did it faster than us. How strong and what kind of speed did they possess to achieve that?”

“Bah, who cares,” Batrire said as she crushed the purple gem.

Magic radiated along her whole arm, and she gasped, eyes becoming purple for a moment.

“What did you get, babe?”

Their healer did a little dance in the snow, no longer appearing to be cold as she smiled.

“My gem gave me an epic group heal! This skill is so amazing!”

The other three did the same, each crushing it and looking energized and excited.

“I got a buff for my wolf,” Cordellia said as she grinned. “I mean… I wish I got this kind of boost. It’s 15% bonus to all its stats!”

A massive grin covered their mage's face as the last bit of magical energy surrounding her arm disappeared.

“That good?”

“Yes! I got the Epic version of Counter-Spell!”

Laughing, Max moved to where Tanila was and lifted her up, spinning her around.

“That’s awesome!”

A *whoop* came from Fowl, who fist-pumped the air a few times.

“Take that you…” his words trailing off. Their warrior cleared his throat, his face slightly flushed.

“Not wanting to finish that statement?” Batrire asked, cocking her head slightly.

“Uh… no… but I did get a skill, and I’m super excited about it.”

The silence lasted about five seconds as everyone waited, and after their archer groaned, Fowl laughed.

“Fine… I’ll tell you. I got Juggernaut.”

“Hot damn!” Max exclaimed. “That’s really good!”

“You bet your sister’s arse… er, I mean… yeah, it is. Being able to move twice as fast, all my resistances max out at 90%, and doing bonus damage when charging for ten seconds is crazy good!”

Watching everyone celebrate, it took a minute for them all to remember they had potions to drink. As one, the four held theirs in hand and looked at him.

“You’re saving it… for your sister?” Tanila asked.

“I am. Mine’s hard to pass up on, but if I’m honest, what would I do with a few more stat points? Besides, my skill gem is also a random one.”

Fowl and Cordellia both started to cough.

“Random? Not a specific one?”

Shaking his head at Batrire, Max held it up.

Inspect Gem

*****

[Epic Skill Gem - Random]

Using this gem grants the individual with a random skill. The skill can be from any path and will start at the Epic rating.

*****

“While I’m all for another crafting skill or fighting one, the problem is that I don’t really *neea* skills. I mean, I could give this to one of you and hope for the best, but I think we would all agree, that’s not a good idea.”

“Says the guy with thousands of skills,” Fowl replied with a wink. “Still, you’re right, and I doubt your sister would have problems with any skill she got, especially if it starts as an epic.”

The slightest squeal came from Batrire, who moved closer to their warrior and hugged him.

“Look at you, babe! Growing up and passing on loot!”

Rolling his eyes, Fowl shook his head.

“I get the desire, but how could someone complain after getting what I got… what any of us got? Besides, we all got a potion to drink as well!”

He waved the gold potion in the air, and they all smiled. Each took the top off and drank it at the same time.

“Ogre nuts,” Cordellia cursed. “Seventy total stat points.”

“Bah, 69 for me,” Batrire stated.

“Same for me, babe!”

Tanila winked and grinned. “Seventy-two.”

“Why don’t you all store your other items,” Max said as the group continued to laugh and tease each other. “We need to figure out what we want to do about this floor.”

“As in fight or let you carry us through it again?” Fowl asked.

Nodding, he pointed at the long pass that vanished out of sight.

“I’m unsure if every floor or just the first grants bonuses. Shouldn’t we try and see if there is such a thing?”

Each began to nod as the crafting material they had won was put away.

“So you’ll just store us in your space again and try to make it to the exit as fast as possible?” Cordellia asked.

“Unless you want to stand out here in the cold and fight our way through it. Or better yet, be strapped to my chest.”

Shaking her head as she frowned, their archer waved a hand before her.

“No thanks. Getting a rushing cold wind on me isn’t my idea of a good time.”

Summoning his dimensional vault, Max allowed them to all move inside, kissing Tanila as she went in last.

“Don’t have too much fun,” she whispered. “But try to be faster this time.”

Laughing, Max nodded and waved at them all.

“I’ll let you out soon enough.”

With the door closed and his attention drawn to the pass, Max couldn’t help but smile.

How fast do we want to try this?

Flying is faster. We could activate Haste to bump that up a bit.

Clearing his throat, Max cracked his neck and jumped into the air, feeling the magic Bob was controlling propel him in the direction of the pass.

[Haste]

The cold wind felt like it was going to eat away at his skin, and pieces of ice, some as big as his fingernail, assaulted him immediately.

Holding a hand over his eyes, they created a vortex of swirling snow and ice as he flew toward the pass.

The moment he arrived at the entrance, he could see caves on the edges of it. Most had ice giants outside them, and the occasional cave had massive wolves with white fur.

Bob didn’t stay low for long, flying higher up the pass, its sheer walls rising upward and disappearing into the clouds.

Right before he was about to enter the clouds, he crashed into a barrier, forcing him down and preventing him from gaining any more altitude.

They slid along an invisible wall that snow, ice, and wind passed through at a speed that seemed impossible, zigzagging through the rising elevation.

Each second left hundreds of yards in their wake, and soon, the clouds pushed them lower and lower, no longer able to stay as high above the snow and ice-covered path.

We’re going down!

No, the land is rising. In a few minutes, I think we'll be right along the ground. Something is keeping us from cheating.

Bob's words were right as in less than ten seconds, they were only ten yards above the tallest cave, and as they flew past them, giants and wolves roared out, announcing they sensed the intruder that had long since passed them.

"Intruder!"

"Intruder!"

Their words almost failed to reach his ears, but like an echo, their calls were picked up by the next, growing louder and louder, somehow drowning out the storm.

Haste expired, and Max felt the jolt of slowing down so much that it seemed like he was crawling compared to before.

Echos of the calls from behind caught up, and soon the giants before them started to turn.

"Intruder! In the air!"

We don't want to kill any if we can help it!

I know. Looks like they're forming up in the pass.

Bob's words were right as the ones further ahead began to move into position, their bodies almost creating a wall as the pass was only about three giants wide.

Like a bird, Max darted left and right, moving up and down as Bob managed to fly between legs, under swings, and between those who got out of position.

Walls of every element formed as Max created space when the occasional group of three blocked the path well.

Wolves ran along the walls, somehow sticking to them like spiders and tried to jump and lunge and him, massive maws clamping shut and only catching on air.

Even amid all that was taking place, Max couldn't help but laugh.

Spells came from a few giants, large chunks of ice flung at him from outstretched hands.

A storm with sword-sized chunks descended from above the barrier, and they did a little bit of damage, yet his regeneration quickly nullified any actual injury that came when one managed to strike him.

Each second was chaos, yet it was like a game for Bob and him. Inside his head, laughter joined his, both of them sensing the chance for rewards. All it took was them not doing the very thing they were good at.

Not killing a thing.

Time stretched on, and the pass rose to a peak, opening up into a large camp of hundreds of ice tents, each with giants or wolves outside them.

This place is huge!

In the middle of the camp, he could see a giant that reminded him of the one from earlier in the tower. Two large horns jutted from its helm, and it stood easily twenty feet taller than all the others.

Do you want to try and fight it or skip it?

Flying around the edge of the open area, the sky was crystal clear, allowing him to see everything without the previous haze the pass had.

A single kill? If we could get away with that? Surely, anyone else would have tried killing it as well.

All for the hope of loot and potential stats. Yet if your team isn't present, I doubt the tower will reward them.

Shouts started coming from camp as his presence was noticed, and a wall of giants and wolves formed around the outer edges.

Two seconds later, a blue wall of some kind started to radiate from where the larger giant stood in the middle, slowly expanding past the closest tents of the camp.

Whatever we're going to do, we better hurry up and decide.

Links

//[**2025-05-15 15:05**]

[None]

44/450(1) Chapter 450 - Off to the Races

[F5] Next Chapter: 2025-05-16 15:02

[2025-05-15 15:04] 1)
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2283417/chapter-450-off-to-the-races;**44/450(1[this.Waybak2025-05-16 15:06],[word.Waybak2025-05-16 15:06],[Wayback_first2025-05-16 15:06],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-16 15:04],[this.word2025-05-16 15:15],[publish2025-05-16 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-16 15:02])Chapter 450 - Off to the Races - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**
Chapter 450 - Off to the Races

Let's do it!

Faster than an arrow from a bow, Max sped toward the boss, his weapon out.

As he moved, it took on the shape of a long, two-handed sword, providing him with maximum cutting space.

Once again, he easily dodged the spells that had started coming toward him, large chunks of ice flying through the air and crashing into the mountain.

Bob controlled their movements, finding a little more room above the current horde of giants. They raced in the direction of the giant they figured had to be the floor boss.

Shouts and roars from all around called out for his death, and the look of rage on the giant’s weathered skin and white-bearded faces left no doubt they weren’t going to parlay as the previous floor.

The tip of his weapon made contact with the expanding blue dome, and the impact caused it to shatter at the spot he struck. Pieces of magical energy cascaded down from where they had been broken off onto the tents and enemies below.

[Status Effect Resisted]

As a few pieces of whatever magic had been contained within that barrier touched him, a slight shiver of cold made it through his resistance, yet Max barely noticed it beyond a feeling of cold water being dumped on him.

Instead his eyes were locked on his opponent as it lifted a twenty-foot two-handed axe and prepared to swing at him.

He smiled, able to gauge just how slow this thing was compared to him. Its weapon moved with the same speed as if he were dueling against Tom or Dexic, and neither one was a threat to him.

Bob adjusted their angle and the speed of their approach. They came in too fast for the boss to react and as he was close to it, he summoned his dimensional vault and willed the door open.

[Power Strike]

[Magical Strike]

He wanted to see just what kind of difference was between the two of them, not wanting to go completely all out.

Like an arrow to the bullseye, his sword found the unprotected spot on the giants neck, and he swung, plunging it deep inside.

Bob once again adjusted everything, flying a tight circle around the boss as his sword stayed inside, cutting it cleanly off and causing it to topple to toward the ground below.

Another shiver of cold came, and Max turned to see his friends peering down from his dimensional vault.

That went about how I expected it might. These things are still vastly beneath us.

We did hit it with a good amount of force and power. Besides that circle you did left all of that momentum focused in the middle.

A chuckle came from inside his head, and Max raced to where the vault was, scanning the area near him and spotting a portal about fifty yards away in the true center of this camp, nothing near it for about twenty yards on every side.

“Did you get anything?!”

“Gods, yes! Experience and a cold breeze up my armor!” Fowl shouted back. “A little warning next time! I almost fell!”

Seeing the smiles on his friends’ faces, Max nodded and motioned for them to back up.

“I’ll close it, and then we’ll drop down real quick to the edge of that portal, and then you can come out!”

All of them quickly took a step back, and Max felt Bob summoning a few wind blades as well as a wall, stopping a trio of ice shards headed at him.

With his vault dismissed, he moved to where the portal was and felt the sensation of passing over a circle like the previous floor.

Its power radiated from under the cover of snow and he quickly moved to other side, summoning his vault once more and preparing to protect his friends from anything that came his way.

Without hesitating, they all moved forward, crossing the ring.

A few more spells came at them as cries and roars echoed around them, but as the ice struck the space above the crystal ring, each of them vanished into nothing instantly.

Outside the crystal circle was an army of giants, roaring and shouting but none able to pass the barrier that protected them.

“That’s pretty convenient,” Cordellia said as she looked at the surrounding camp. “How many are there?”

“A thousand. Maybe more,” Max replied, dismissing his vault as he stepped back over the ring and turned his attention at the giant he had killed that had toppled over.

“What are you waiting for?” Fowl asked.

“That might have been a floor boss. I’m waiting to see if–”

As if on cue, the body began to start to fade, and he sensed another shape taking form behind him.

Spinning around he laughed and pointed at the chest which was made of ice, a depiction of the camp and the one he killed etched along the outer edge.

“Holy–”

“We know,” Batrire said, shoving their warrior and stopping his normal phrase. “Still, I might agree with you on that.”

Each of them gazed at the eight-foot-long chest four feet high, all knowing how rare it was for one this big.

“So, you did that up there hoping we might get credit for the kill?” Tanila asked.

Winking at her, Max shrugged.

“I’m still not sure how the tower handles my dimensional vault. I doubted you would get any credit if you were sealed up inside so I figured it was time to test it.”

“And since we got experience…”

He nodded at the woman he loved and moved to where the chest was, lifting the lid up and letting out a low whistle.

“Everett is going to love this.”

As one they all joined him, seeing the four large blue crystals that awaited inside.

“How much power are in those?” Batrire asked.

“I can’t describe it other than a lot… perhaps not double the clear ones but at least half again as much.”

“Who cares about Everett,” Cordellia said as she pointed at the five items in the chest. “I wana know what those are.”

Motioning for her to go first, Max watched their archer reach inside, taking a blue pair of earrings that looked like a tiny ice shard.

Her hand trembled a few moments after she held it, and then her smile showed every one of her teeth.

“Gods, I’ve missed getting rewards with you,” she said, winking at him. “This is… crazy.”

Max and the rest reached in, Tanila and Batrire getting a pair of earrings similar to hers while Fowl and him got a ring.

Inspect Ring

*****

Ring of Ice Nobility

+10% to all stats

+30% to Ice and cold magic

*****

It’s not bonded… and it’s this strong…

Which is a good sign in some ways. Perhaps this is simply just the kind of loot that the tower normally gives.

“Is this 10% for all of you as well?” Fowl asked as he admired the ring on his finger.

Nods came and Max quickly scooped up the four crystals and pointed at the portal.

“Not to sound funny, but let’s discuss these on the other floor. We’re technically wasting time acting like this.”

A snort from their healer was all she gave as she took off toward the portal, everyone else quickly following her lead.

So much for warriors first.

***

The smell of smoke was overwhelming, and when Max’s eyes allowed him to see he couldn’t help but frown.

“Underground. We’re underground,” Fowl said.

“How do you know?”

Their warrior tapped his head as he looked at Cordellia.

“I’m a dwarf. We know when we’re underground.”

Their archer rolled her eyes, and Max took a few steps forward as the others remained where they were.

He could feel a dampness in the air, and the floor was muddy, squelching under Max’s boots. Yellow moss grew along the tunnel walls, giving off a decent amount of light, running all along the surface of the thirty-yard-wide area.

“We have a portal behind us,” Batrire called out. “What’s the plan?”

A few yards ahead, Max could sense what he was looking for and moved to the crystal circle that was around them.

Touching it, he felt the same jolt as before.

[Tower Floor 62 Reached]

[Completion of Tower Floor 61 Achieved]

[Full Level of Tower Experience Granted]

[Calculating Results of Previous Floor]

[…]

[…]

[Results Totaled]

[Time Spent on Floor is within Top 10]

[Number of Kills on Floor is in bottom 99%]

[Calculating Rewards]

[Rewards for Achieving Top 10 Fastest Time]

[Full Level Experience Granted & Skill Gem]

[Error - Experience denied]

[No Replacement given for lost experience]

[Determining Skill Gem based on current skills]

[Current Skills are varied. Special Gem Given]

[Skill Gem Granted - Epic Rank - Random Skill Granted upon use]

“What the heck?” Max said out loud as the skill gem that appeared fell into the wet floor, making a squelching noise.

“What’s wrong?” Tanila asked as she moved to where he was.

“We were in the top ten this time on speed and not the top three. Just what other groups out there can go faster?”

“And on kills?”

“See for yourself,” he told her, motioning to the ring before grabbing and storing the gem.

Their mage grunted as a shard appeared before her.

“Seriously? The bottom 99%? Does that mean we were supposed to kill everything?”

As the others got their reward and each of them saw the same notification, Max couldn’t help but frown.

What kind of other teams could be doing this? I mean... it would have to be a team right?

There is no way I can answer that question, but I’m also smart enough to know there are beings far more powerful than us. You and I both knew the one who came to Igarra’s world and challenged you would have been impossible to defeat at our current power. We also don’t know how many worlds this tower connects to.

But could there really be someone faster than us?

Obviously there is.

Unable to help it Max groaned, and when he saw everyone looking at him, he tapped his head.

“Private conversation. Sorry.”

“Tell Bob I said hi,” Fowl said before crushing the gem in his hand.

A matching groan came from within, and Max knew his skill hated it when anyone but him used that name.

“Well, it’s not as good but I’ll take it,” their warrior said with a shrug. “Sword Mastery. I guess all I need now are two more melee skills and I can be special like you.”

“Wizards step,” Tanila said with a grin. “A small teleport like yours.”

“Single person buffs for 5% stats,” Batrire stated. “Can only be on one person at a time though.”

“Bah, and all I got was an invisible shot,” Corellia declared. “Can’t see it coming.”

Shaking his head, Max knew some of those were better than others, and wondered if the lower ranking is what potentially determined the skills that were given.

“So now what?” their mage asked. “We doing another floor or…”

As everyone looked at him, Max shrugged.

“Part of me wants to keep going. The other part of me wants to return home, take a shower and then pay a visit to Dagon.”

“He says that so casually,” Fowl muttered. “Just going to stroll up to the dwarven king and be like *hey buddy, I got some questions and need answers.* ”

Chuckles came as Fowl acted out while he spoke.

“So you’re saying you want to stay here when I go?”

“Bah, don’t make me tell your sister stories about you.”

Grinning, Max pointed at the portal.

“Then let’s go home. I’m ready to get a few answers before we do this again.”

***

“You’ve returned.”

Even before his eyes saw the speaker, Max knew that the person approaching him was Vella.

“Indeed I have. Tell me, Vella, have you been waiting for me this entire time?”

The look on her face cut off his attempt at being funny.

“Yes. We need to talk.”

Sighing, Max motioned at his friends.

“They can come. That way you’ll have less to explain later.”

Links

//[2025-05-16 15:15]

[None]

45/451(1) Chapter 451 - A Message Delivered

Next Chapter:

2025-05-17 15:02 [2025-05-16 15:06]

1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2286133/chapter-451-a-message-delivered**;45/451(1[this.Waybak2025-05-19 8:45],[word.Waybak2025-05-19 8:45],[Wayback_first2025-05-19 8:45],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-19 8:45],[this.word2025-05-19 9:02],[publish2025-05-17 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-17 15:02])Chapter 451 - A Message Delivered - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1,L2]

Chapter 451 - A Message Delivered

The carriage he and Tanila shared with Vella was quiet beyond the first few questions the captain asked about his tower experience.

He could sense that she was nervous, and it took him longer to realize why than he had wished.

We’re giving off an aura like those guards and Dagon did. How do we turn it off?

Bob said nothing momentarily, and then Max could feel something inside him vanish.

Imagine yourself putting on a mask before battle. I just took it off. Try to put it back on and then undo it.

Tanila glanced at him, sensing the change, as did Vella. Max ignored them both for a moment and closed his eyes.

Inside, he tried to imagine how he and Fowl used to prepare for a fight, psyching themselves up. After about five seconds, he found the switch, and his sonar told him both women had leaned back a little.

“Max…”

Just as quickly, he undid it and felt Vella let out the breath she had just taken.

“We’re giving off an aura, and I think it’s bothering her,” Max stated as he opened his eyes and motioned at the captain, who looked a little pale. “Think about taking a mask off. Like you were prepared for battle and–”

Immediately, Tanila’s aura, which he sensed, was gone, and she smiled.

“That was… fast.”

“Lots of time in my life wearing masks. I started to figure out what you had done after you had canceled it and turned it back on. So is this what the guards had?”

Nodding, he smiled at Vella, who was breathing a little bit easier.

“Thank you for whatever that was,” she said after clearing her throat. “It was like something was trying to suffocate me. Sitting this close was overpowering. The longer I felt it, the worse it got. It’s new, so I’m guessing the tower.”

His neck froze as he tried to nod, but his mouth got caught on nothing.

Tanila's face showed surprise as hers mimicked his.

“Some things… we can’t talk about,” he got out with a slight gasp. “Not because we don’t want to but because we can’t.”

A single nod was all the captain gave as she shifted her large body on the bench she was on.

“I’ve read reports and understand. Say no more. Forgive me also for ambushing you. I’m afraid it appears that the zealots are active again.”

Her frown said more than the tone of her voice, and Max grabbed Tanila’s hand and felt her grip tighten immediately.

“What has happened?”

“I’m not sure what it is, but a small village is… gone. I mean… the bodies are there, but…”

Her voice trailed off as she glanced out of the carriage.

He looked at Tanila, and his eyes begged a question he doubted she would answer.

Shaking her head, the woman he loved frowned.

The rest of the ride wasn’t any better.

***

“We’re going to use the transportation feature as it’s faster,” Vella said as they huddled together in the crystal square on the floor. “It’s a few days' ride outside of town, and I know you can get back without a problem once we’re done.”

A chuckle from their archer caused the captain to glance at her, and Cordellia almost took a step back.

“I’m glad you taught us how to turn that off,” Fowl whispered as they watched the attendant at the adventurer's guild leave and shut the door they were in. It explains why everyone was acting the way they did around us.”

“And here I thought it was that they all wondered how you managed to marry a dwarf like me,” Batrire teased.

During the light banter, the room began to flicker as the power inside the crystals grew.

“Tighten your stomach,” Max said before it transported them.

***

Tears flowed down Tanila’s face, and Batrire rubbed her friend's back.

Over fifty bodies lay in a row, guards slowly covering and uncovering the corpses as Max and Vella continued to inspect them all.

When the pair returned, a rage that had long been suppressed was about to explode.

Children… almost two dozen children… I’m going to kill her!

The time will come. Calm yourself. Right now, that is what you need. When the moment appears, I will ensure you can release that rage.

Taking a deep breath, Max let it out slowly and reached for Tanila’s hand, smiling when she took it.

“So it was her. You’re certain?”

Nodding, their mage sniffed and used the handkerchief Max had given her to blot out the flow of liquid from her eyes.

“That imprint on their forehead with the lipstick. It’s her calling card. For her to be so obvious is… bad.”

“Our reports have told us about it, but to have you both confirm it means a lot. The Enlightened Souls have not been very helpful. I asked for some confirmation, but the response I got was basically to go hump an ogre or two.”

“Elves do not like to talk about this,” Cordellia said quietly. “To do so… is very dangerous, but yes, that is the mark of one of the princesses of the King.”

The captain’s frown grew as she nodded once.

“And there isn’t anything I can do. Even if we were to catch her inside our kingdom, the political problems would be…”

Max watched as the woman tried to come up with an ending to her statement.

“Don’t try to catch her,” Tanila said, her posture regaining its normal stance. “She is too strong. If your guards attempted to do so, the ones she travels with and herself would easily defeat them.”

“What about Max?”

He could see Tanila flinch and the slightest downturn of her lips before they returned to their neutral state.

“I would say I would bet on him, but I cannot be certain. Her power is a strong one… and if she is being this bold… I think she is trying to call him out.”

Vella’s frown turned into a grinding noise as her jaw muscles bulged.

“She is that strong or that stupid to try and gain his attention?”

“Yes.”

Both women stared at each other, and then the captain broke the gaze first.

“You need to be safe and not involve yourself in this.”

Max laughed and shook his head at the woman who still towered above him.

“I think we both know that’s not going to happen. Otherwise, you wouldn’t have brought me out here and shown me this. I’m guessing that’s the official stance, and Major Greyson wants me to know he can’t ask for help officially?”

Slowly, the woman’s frown lessened.

“We are unable to ask tower climbers to engage in kingdom disputes. Doing so would potentially lead to another great war like the last one that took place. However… if an individual such as yourself, who has been targeted by the zealot group multiple times, learned about this… and chose to involve themself… How could I, a simple captain, hope to stop you?”

Nodding, Max squeezed Tanila’s hand before freeing it and holding it out.

“Then I appreciate you showing me this and telling me not to get involved, Captain Vella. If I do, I’ll make sure not to inform you.”

The first smile since they arrived on the woman’s tanned face, and she took his hand and shook it.

“Be safe, Max Hoste. Our kingdom owes you much, and I would hate to hear you stumbled into something you couldn’t deal with.”

***

“No one talks about this back in the city, understood?”

Everyone nodded as they waited for Max to return them to Peltagow.

“When we’re alone, that’s fine, but I don’t want my family or anyone else, not even Everett, involved in this.”

“But he could help,” Fowl protested. “He could–”

“Get involved in a kingdom problem,” Batrire said, cutting him off. “We both know the stories. Factions and adventures involved in kingdom strife is a bad thing, and the only people who suffer are the common ones.”

Spitting on the ground, their warrior let out a grunt.

“Don’t feel bad, shorty. I’m just as pissed,” Cordellia stated. “It’s my people doing this crap, and no one seems to care.”

“Some of us care,” Tanila corrected her. “We’re going to stop her, one way or another.”

“Just how strong is she?” Max asked.

“Her skill has many names, but it's often called the Devouring Kiss. Unlike your skill, which requires you to kill something to get their power, she has to kiss them right here.”

She was tapping her forehead.

“Anywhere else doesn’t work. She also has to hold that position for a while, and it’s like… drinking through a straw.”

Fowl let out a retching sound.

That is a dangerous skill if given time to grow. One of the stronger skills stems from my fellow black ones.

Are we in danger of it?

Only if you allowed her to hold you still while she attempted. I would do everything within my power to stop such an attempt, even if you were unconscious or something else.

I could potentially resist her for a while, but depending on her strength and how long it went on… even a stone can be worn down by enough water dripping on it over time.

“Any other skills?”

“Oh, she’s a gifted fighter with a blade,” Tanila replied. “Where I’m great with spells, she is the same with weapons.”

“So what I’m hearing is she could beat Max?”

Their mage frowned and shook her head at Fowl.

“I’m not saying she can. What I am saying is we shouldn’t underestimate her. She has never been this bold before. For her to do so now… she was told to or wanted to.”

“Your father?”

“Perhaps. I doubt my mother could stand up to her if she were this bold. Unlike me, she hasn’t hesitated to grow stronger.”

“What would a village like that offer her?” Batrire asked.

“Nothing… it would be like Max going out and killing a thousand goblins in a starting zone. There is no point unless one is sending a message.”

For a minute, a gentle breeze and a few birds were all the noise as everyone considered what had happened.

“I guess we should return home then,” Max stated. “We can spend a day or two there and then visit Dagon before we hit the tower again.”

Everyone gathered close, letting him touch them as they prepared to leave.

***

Stacy stared at the two purple gems on the small table.

“You’re serious?”

“And you act like I didn’t just give you a potion that gave 58 stat points.”

“No! I mean, yes! I mean… but skills. SKILLS!”

She waved both hands in the air as her parents sat next to each other on the couch, each looking on in shock.

“Yes. I’m giving them to you. They could be anything, and I mean *anything* . You could end up with a sewing skill or be able to call upon the power of lightning.”

“What about… like your skill?” Her voice had almost cracked as she asked that.

“No,” Max replied with a grin. “Mine is unique. Besides, I’m pretty sure I’m the only one who can handle it.”

A grunt from Bob and what felt like an eye roll came through their bond.

“So what do I do? Just hold it and crush it?” Stacy asked as she picked up the first one he wanted her to try.

“Yup! Show me how strong you are.”

He watched as his sister inspected the purple gem closely, noting that it took up most of her palm.

It looked like a large precious gem, yet he knew she could sense its power.

“Here goes nothing,” Stacy said, grinning the entire time.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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Links

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[L1] https://www.royalroadcdn.com/public/covers-large/cooling-down-post-apoc-progression-fantasy-aabatj-jcbc.jpg?time=1747323467

[L2] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/116861/cooling-down-post-apoc-progression-fantasy

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46/452(1) Chapter 452 – King Fights: Round 2 1)

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2288260/chapter-452-king-fights-round-2;**46/452(1[this.Waybak2025-05-19 8:46],[word.Waybak2025-05-19 8:46],[Wayback_first2025-05-19 8:46],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-19 8:44],[this.word2025-05-19 9:13],[publish2025-05-18 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-18 15:02])Chapter 452 – King Fights: Round 2 - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**

Chapter 452 – King Fights: Round 2

Max stared at his sister, whose eyes wouldn’t stop blinking.

Both of his parents had similar expressions, each of them leaning forward on the couch.

“Well…”

Shaking her head, Stacy grinned at him.

And then she vanished from his sight.

Both of his parents let out a gasp and started looking around the room.

He however could only grin as he sensed his sister moving around the small table between them, drawing closer and closer.

Stealth and tracking… I guess I shouldn’t complain too much about not getting to use those.

Tracking would have been good, but I agree with you that neither of those would have been what we acquired.

Just a single step before she got to him, Max disappeared himself and was behind her, picking her up from behind and laughing.

As they both appeared before their parents, who were still apparently in shock, his sister tried and failed to break his grip.

“Not fair! How?!”

Slowly putting her down, he laughed when she punched him, yet the grin on her face never vanished.

“You’re not the only one with that ability, and you must always remember to pay special attention to the skill description. There are ways to be discovered even with stealth.”

“Max… you have stealth as well?”

Nodding at his father, Max winked.

“I’m a bit of a special case, but yes. If I’m honest, Stacy has a pretty powerful kit, and with everything she’s been given, she shouldn’t be in trouble unless she does something stupid.”

“You say that like I’m an idiot,” she declared as she punched at him again.

“No, just inexperienced. Think about it. What if I know you’re invisible, and I have sand or other material and toss it in the air? It could land on you. In a dust storm, your form might appear to those with a high enough perception and looking out for it.

“Dozens of casters can see through Stealth, even the low-level goblin ones you’ve faced. I learned all this the hard way. You’ll have to as well.”

Stacy took a step back and frowned.

“Wait… so you’re telling me this skill isn’t as good as I thought?”

Shaking his head, Max sighed. “No, it’s an exceptionally powerful skill when used correctly. Just don’t depend upon it too much and learn when it will work and won’t. Ask Tom to give you some pointers, but if I’m guessing, he will curse first and then make you run low-level dungeons with casters who can sense you before he takes you into the dueling field and shows you other stuff.

“Experience is powerful. You need more of it.”

“Bah, you sound just like Tom… always telling me to slow down.”

Max moved until he was directly before his sister and got in her face. His smile was gone, and he put a hand on each shoulder.

“Listen to him. Trust me. Don't ignore his advice if you want to reach levels most could never dream about and be the adventurer and mother you want to be. Trust me.”

She sighed and then wrapped her arms around him.

“Thank you for everything,” she whispered. “I mean it.”

Hugging her back, he felt a little bit of the weight he always carried vanish and for a moment, just stood there, enjoying the chance to be with his family.

***

Everett handed another journal to Max as he put a dozen others back into a storage chest.

“That’s one of the only other ones I know of that mention anything about the tower floors you’re facing. I’m a little excited to write down what you could share with me for whoever comes next.”

Tanila scoffed as her and the other three took turns flipping through books older than all of them.

“Nothing in this one is of any value. In fact, I’d say that most of it is wrong.”

“How so?”

She frowned and handed the book she held to Everett.

“It talks about tower gems, and yet – “

Her throat grew tight, and Max could see she was trying to talk and struggling with it.

“The drop rate isn’t like our old one.”

“It’s less?” the Faction leader asked, as a single eyebrow rose.

Nodding slowly, she tried to speak but couldn’t.

“Don’t hurt yourself. I understand what it feels like to try and talk when under an oath. The tower doesn’t play around, and if what you are telling me is what I think it is, then yes, this line would be wrong. Which begs the question why?”

“Because saying nothing would be far worse,” Max answered. “No one would press on or attempt the tower after that point. Without information, most would give up. Only the few who were really crazy would do so.”

“True… but that means most other Factions have the wrong information. How many teams have we sent into the tower and lost because we didn’t know more?”

“Does it matter? Even if they knew everything, I’ll be honest… today’s floor was a bit scary. To think about having to fight all the creatures in there. I’m not sure how a normal team would have done it.”

“By normal, you mean…”

“Not us,” Max replied. “Tell me, out of every team you’ve seen or had since you started adventuring, how many could beat us?”

Sighing, Everett sat down in his chair and carefully put the book down Tanila had given him.

“None.”

“And I’m afraid it only gets worse. Are the rewards worth it? Only if you can stay alive.”

“Hey, what about this?” Fowl asked as he held a book out to Batrire.

“Oh, sorry dear, I forgot you could read.”

She ignored the finger he gave as she took the book and scanned the page.

“This one says that beyond the 60th floor, many teams would attempt the same floor multiple times. I didn’t say why, though. Is that because they are –”

She choked and then cleared it, shaking her head.

“Yeah… I can’t say that.”

“Another secret?” Everett asked.

Nodding, Max tapped his chin.

“It’s an interesting idea. If one was able to rerun it.”

Max knew each person was wondering the same thing.

Could we rerun a floor and try to be faster and get a better reward? That would explain why we were so slow on that last floor.

Would the tower do that, though? Would it allow groups to rerun a tower multiple times? I could see both the potential and the negative aspects of that.

I guess we could easily retry the 61st floor and just go for speed. I mean… can anyone do it faster if we go all out?

I guess we’ll find out soon enough.

Grinning, Max tapped his head.

“Tomorrow we’ll try something real quick. After that we can return here and finish the things we must do before heading out. Is there anything you need me to ask Dagon while we’re there?”

Shaking his head, Everett picked up and stored the book he had set down.

“Nothing that I need. Just let me know if I can help. I spoke with the council, and they are willing to give up the fire-forged bar. This time, the vote was an easy one.”

“It’s about damn time,” Fowl muttered as he rose. “Give a Faction enough materials to own every kingdom, and they still have to vote on something.”

***

Running his fingers gently along Tanila’s stomach, Max couldn’t help but smile.

“Our child is growing. Little by little, every day.”

“Sometimes I hate you,” she teased, poking his chest. “It’s not fair that you can do that.”

“Fair or not, it’s not my call. Besides, you’ll have enough to worry about if this thing keeps getting bigger.”

Her hand snaked out and grabbed his neck, pulling his head near hers.

“I might not be able to physically hurt you, but if I think for a moment you’re calling me fat–”

Shaking his head, Max gave his best grin and tried to kiss her. “No, my love, I am simply saying our child is growing and using you as its home. I’m not Fowl, after all.”

She growled before kissing him.

Though you had a Fowl moment right there.

***

As soon as all four of his team were inside his dimensional vault, Max shut the door and was gone.

Bob and he sped through the frozen tower floor, knowing the limits of the heights they could reach, and avoided it, choosing to be as fast as possible.

Haste wore off, and once again, Bob used his power to reset it, allowing them to reach the crystal circle much faster.

The only difference was this time, there were two bosses.

Not caring, Max was past both of them, his dimensional vault open as his friends raced out of it and to the portal. Before a single spell struck the barrier, they were gone.

***

[Calculating Results of Previous Floor]

[…]

[…]

[Results Totaled]

[Time Spent on Floor is within Top 3]

[Calculating Rewards]

[Rewards for Achieving Top 3 Fastest Time]

[Full Level Experience Granted & Skill Gem]

[Error - Experience Already Granted]

[Error - Skill Gem Already Granted]

“How in the gods is that possible?” Fowl asked. “I mean, we weren’t in there that long.”

Frowning, Max shook his head.

“I… I don’t know, but if someone was faster, they must have skill or stats or…”

“Or what?”

Looking at their warrior, he shrugged.

“It says top three but not which spot. What if I’m already the fastest? What if the rewards we got are the best?”

“Then we’re just wasting time, and the floor continually gets harder,” Tanila stated. “You said there were two bosses this time. Another way the tower makes things a greater challenge?”

“I’m glad I woke up early for this,” Cordellia said. “Not that I really slept. I mean we all don’t sleep as much, right?”

“Speak for yourself,” Fowl replied. “I’ll have you know I’m always tired.”

Rolling her eyes, their archer pointed at the portal.

“I’m heading out since I know we’re not going to do the floor. See you all tonight.”

Fowl and Batrire began to move after her as she started to leave.

“You okay?” Tanila asked as the other three filed out.

“Yeah. Just trying to ensure we’re getting the best results and everyone is as strong as possible.”

She touched his cheek with her hand and shook her head.

“Don’t crush yourself underneath that load. We’re strong enough to carry ourselves. In the meantime, why don’t you go and finish some of the items you promised to make? Then I’ll go look for a new outfit since apparently my stomach is too big.”

“Yeah… I’m not going to reply to that last part. Have fun shopping, and try not to spend all your money.”

She winked, and they went to the portal together.

***

Well, I can’t do much more than this. Four weapons is hard to complain about in a single day. I just wish the experience was better. Three to five per weapon is almost worthless.

You do realize that you’ll never level up.

You say that, but it’s what you believe is true. When I asked you the first time if I could gain enough experience through crafting to reach level two, you said most likely not. Not absolutely.

That was because I didn’t realize at that time how crazy you were. Yet another thing that makes you special, Max.

Still… I’m not going to sacrifice everything else right now to pursue it. We’ll see eventually what happens. I’m wondering what we need to do about these tower floors. At some point we’ll have to fight. I’m fairly certain the tower won’t allow us to keep avoiding it altogether.

I agree. The real question then comes again: when will you stop carrying your team?

Always the same question.

And your answer never changes.

Sighing, Max stored the bow he had made for the Faction, hating that Bob was right.

Until I know I can’t.

Just pray it isn’t too late.

Links

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46-2/452-2(1) 50 years....

1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2288400/50-years**;46-2/452-2(1[this.Waybak2025-05-19 8:45],[word.Waybak2025-05-19 8:45],[Wayback_first2025-05-19 8:45],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-19 8:45],[this.word2025-05-19 9:25],[publish2025-05-18 16:07],[this.Last_edit2025-05-18 16:07])50 years.... - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**
It's hard to believe that I turned 50 today.

This journey began in April 2023, and I am grateful to each of you who has supported me along the way.

I never would have imagined doing this, but I am grateful every day that I get to write and share the stories that live within my mind (not in a crazy way, either).

With book 9 of Ultimate Level 1 done and sent to the editor, I'm working hard on the next arc of the series while also writing my timeloop story and my Viking story. I have a ton of other things planned as well!

(Next week I launch a choose your own path story where the readers decide the next chapter!)

Thank you again for the love over these years and for overlooking my learning how to write. Perhaps one day I'll get a chapter that doesn't need fixing ;)

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

For those who don't want to wait, book 8 is done on Patreon! Book 9 starts next week on it!

Links

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47/453(1) Chapter 453 - A Chance to Not Hold Back

[F5] Next Chapter: 2025-05-19 15:02

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https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2290400/chapter-453-a-chance-to-not-hold-back;**47/453(1[this.Waybak2025-05-19 15:07],[word.Waybak2025-05-19 15:07],[Wayback_first2025-05-19 15:07],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-19 15:06],[this.word2025-05-19 15:07],[publish2025-05-19 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-19 15:02])Chapter 453 - A Chance to Not Hold Back - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**
Chapter 453 - A Chance to Not Hold Back

Max and the others sat in the chairs Dagon had offered them, and only two of his Elite Guards were in the room. They sat there, watching the dwarven King play with his beard.

“Already on the 62nd floor. That is impressive. And your aura is proof of that. How did the first floor treat you?”

“The choice of killing what we would call children?”

A slight frown appeared on the older dwarf's lips as he nodded slowly.

“Not something any of us would ever want to do,” their warrior replied.

“Yet you do recall what you were told before that floor. Each choice you make has lasting effects. I’ve often wondered what they meant by that.”

Fowl cleared his throat a little and when Dagon looked at him and nodded, he sat up a little straighter.

“Do you mean because of how it would change you?”

“Exactly! I’ve often wondered about the weight I carried from that moment. War is an ugly thing; in battle, one can close off a part of one's mind and soul. Those you fight and kill are simply obstacles to the safety and well-being of those whom you love. Yet standing there and seeing a child and knowing you may have to end their life to accomplish a goal like the tower is different. It does things to you and changes you inside.”

Max knew the truth of that statement, already having had to prepare himself for the worst if that moment had come.

“There is a lot of reasons why I never ventured further into the tower. Just because I’m the King, many forget that I was simply the prince at one time, and while my father did everything he could to prepare me for the mantle of leadership, the tower was one of the greatest tests I ever faced.”

Sighing, Dagon leaned over, picked up the jeweled cup he had near him, and took a drink before playing with it momentarily.

“Leaders are forged in battle and tough moments. Like metal, it takes fire to cleanse the impurities before they can be used for real purposes. One must pound them into the shape that will be useful. Not all tools are equal, but all have a purpose. The harder part is being the one who shapes tools.”

“Why is that?” Cordellia asked.

Smiling, the King pointed at Max with one of his large fingers.

“He could tell you. It takes patience and effort to make something great. You could spend your whole life looking for the right materials and never acquire them all, unable to make that one object you always desired.

“You could also forge thousands of weapons or tools and find out that none of them were used for the purpose they had been made for. Then you have to deal with those

who don’t like what you made. Even worse are those who think they can become you by simply killing you.”

How little does he know.

“I’m sorry, but what I can tell you about the tower is limited to the single floor I did. I won’t ask what the floor said your rank was. Just know that part of me fears the tower because of what I think it is trying to do.”

Everyone waited silently as Dagon took another drink and set his cup down. Slowly, the dwarf leaned forward, his large presence seeming to grow.

“The tower doesn’t want to be beaten by everyone. Only those it feels can become what it wants you to be. Part of me believes it will force you to change if it can. If I can give you any advice as an old dwarf: Don’t forget who you are no matter what is offered, if you do that and let yourself go, the person you’ll see in the mirror each morning will haunt you for the rest of your life.”

Finished speaking, Dagon leaned back in his chair.

“That… was deep,” Fowl stated.

Laughing, the King nodded. “Sometimes I wish you would have accepted that offer to join my Guard. It’s evident just how wise you are by what you say.”

Max and the others glanced at each other, all trying not to react as their warrior almost seemed to light up, sticking his chest out.

“Now then, can I do anything else for you all? While I do enjoy a good distraction from my daily life, there are thousands of dwarves waiting for me to make decisions, and I still have one request to make before you go.”

“I think that’s all our questions,” Max replied as he glanced at the others. “What is it you need?

“Well, anytime I can, I’ll spend some time with you all. If I’m honest, your party managed to chip away some of the hardness that had taken hold in my heart. Even though it hurt, I needed to have it beaten off.”

Fowl suddenly burst into laughter, and then Dagon’s face went red before he started laughing.

“Men,” Batrire groaned.

A few chuckles later, Dagon cleared his throat and banged his chest.

“I should be grateful my wife isn’t here for that moment. She would not have appreciated it. But back to my request. Max, I need you to duel me.”

His head jerked slightly, and he watched the King's smile grow.

“You want to duel me? Is there a reason?”

“There is, but I won’t tell you until after we’ve done it. Trust me. You’re going to want to do this and don’t worry about either of us dying. I have a special training area crafted by Ockrim himself.”

“Oh you have to say yes!” Fowl exclaimed almost coming out of his chair.

Shrugging, Max motioned to his friend with his head.

“Looks like I have no choice. I accept.”

“Wonderful!”

The dwarven King clapped his hands together, and the two guards nodded, one of them quickly exiting the room.

“If you’ll follow me, I’ll lead the way.

***

The tour through the castle inside the mountain had left all them speechless.

Perfectly cut lines with no cracks in the stone created every hallway and room. Gone was the standard worked stone they had seen everywhere else. These pieces appeared to have been laid by something other than dwarven hands.

The section Dagon took them through was different and running his fingers along the wall, Max could almost sense the power it had taken to carve such a thing.

Each of these hallways are perfectly straight and level.

As we discussed before, if Ockrim himself did this, then his power is beyond what we both believed. I’m a little excited to see this room that Dagon says was built by their god for them.

Eventually, they came to stand before a normal-looking stone door except for the runes etched on it. Magical energy started to course through them when Dagon placed his hand on the brown stone, red and gold light swirling around where his flesh touched.

“Sorry, it’s a bit dramatic if you ask me. Still it prevents anyone without my blessing from entering here.”

A click came, and then the door swung inward, revealing a large room easily a quarter mile long and a good two hundred yards wide. Even the ceiling was impressive, stretching upward fifty yards.

The crystal they recognized from some of the tower floors was all around, illuminating the area and giving off a warm light.

“Come in, come in,” Dagon said as he motioned for them to follow. “I’ve got a special place everyone else can watch from.”

Max poked Fowl in the side as his friend's mouth hung open, ignoring the scowl he got in return.

“This is a rather large area. Do you do a lot of training here?”

“Every week, my Guard comes here and trains. I try to make sure that I participate at least once a month. One can go all out in this room and not fear death because of the runes and power within the stone.”

“This place is real,” Tanila whispered.

“What was that?”

She shook her head and looked at the dwarven King who was smiling at her.

“This room… There were stories about such a place, but no one believed them. The kind of power it would take to build it… is beyond what most could comprehend.”

“Aye that it is. We don’t speak about it often; only the special ones ever get a chance to witness a duel here. However, as you have learned, one cannot be afraid of holding back in the tower. To do so can mean the difference between life and death. So it appears Ockrim knew this and blessed us greatly by giving a treasure to our people like this.

“For generations, the greatest fighters and tower climbers have come here, honing their skills like never before. I know of the training areas most Factions have and while they are good, they don’t convey the same truth.”

“Which is what?” Cordellia asked.

“How hard have you ever really gone on those training grounds?”

Their archer shuffled her feet slightly and shrugged.

“Every shot had to be perfect, or I might fly off outside of it. I can’t imagine if someone else was injured because I was careless or if my opponent dodged my attack. So I held back a little to ensure I never hurt an innocent bystander.”

“Exactly!” Dagon exclaimed. “There is none of that here. The wall has withstood everything thrown at it since it was first built. I’ve personally struck it as hard as I could and watched it repair itself in an instant. Even better is the fact that if you die on this field, you’ll experience the pain and agony of the injury, but when that final moment comes and your life is snuffed out…”

He snapped his fingers and grinned.

“You return completely whole and ready to go again!”

“That is quite impressive,” Batrire said. “As someone who almost died before, I cannot imagine one would intentionally choose to fight like this, but it makes sense.”

“Indeed, sister. Now then. Follow me and let me get everyone else into their spot. I don’t have endless time, but I plan to get a few matches before I depart.”

“Uh… what about cooldowns on skills?”

A belly laugh came from the king as his oversized body shook slightly.

“Oh that’s easy. You just have to die to reset them all.”

Max felt his heart stop for a beat, and then he couldn’t help but smile.

This is going to be fun.

Yes. Yes, it is.

***

“I will tell you this, Max: the moment the sound of that horn rings out, I won’t hold back. Please don’t do that either. No matter how this fight ends, I’ll die and reset every skill I have because I need you to learn something.”

“Why are you telling me this and doing this for me?”

Tapping the helmet on his head, Dagon smiled from behind the opening.

“Ockrim told me I needed to. That means I’m going to give you the beating of your life.”

“Wait, what–”

“Later!” the King called out as he walked away. “We can talk after the first match!”

Ockrim told him to do this?

Focus on the fight. We’re about to go up against one of the oldest, and I’m guessing, strongest dwarves in the world. We need to throw everything we have at him.

You’re not worried about showing all of our cards?

No. For whatever reason, the game the gods are playing in has brought us here to truly test us. So, we will pass this test or keep dying until we do.

Taking a deep breath, Max nodded and looked up in the special seats where a crystal pane covered the outer area. Behind it was the rest of his team, each looking on with different expressions etched on their faces.

Fowl and Batrire were practically salivating at the mouth, faces pressed up against the crystal, shouting something he couldn’t hear.

Cordellia was bobbing her head slowly, an unusual grin present.

Meanwhile, Tanila looked anxious, and he couldn’t guess why.

Focus.

Finding the spot marked on the stone floor for him to start, Max turned and faced Dagon, now outfitted in a glowing red suit of armor. The chest and leg pieces had dragon scales on it, and the rest were glowing with runes.

In the King’s oversized hand was a two-handed hammer that was easily eight feet tall and ready to crush Max under the wide head.

Max's weapon took the shape of a hooked scythe, and he rotated his shoulders as Fowl always did, holding his gorgon shield in his left hand.

“Ready?!”

He nodded at the call from one of the guards.

Dagon laughed, grasped the hammer in both hands, and mimicked his call.

Then the horn rang.

Links

//[2025-05-19 15:07]

[None]

[F5] 48/454(1) Chapter 454 - Fighting A King

[F5] Next Chapter: 2025-05-20 15:02

[2025-05-19 15:07] [F5] 1)
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2292786/chapter-454-fighting-a-king**;48/454(1[this.Waybak=1 2025-05-20 15:10],[word.Waybak2025-05-20 15:10],[Wayback_first2025-05-20 15:10],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-20 15:09],[this.word2025-05-20 15:11],[publish2025-05-20 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-20 15:02])Chapter 454 - Fighting A King - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Saved for rocco

Chapter 454 - Fighting A King

Dagon was true to his word, and the moment the sound began, the King moved with a speed greater than even Kazrak had.

Max didn’t have a choice as the gigantic hammer swung, unable to dodge the first attack and unsure of what would happen if he blocked it.

[Blink]

The maximum distance of his ability was fifty yards, and Max used that to his advantage, putting space between them and letting Bob start the spell casting.

As the sweeping left-to-right attack of the hammer went through empty space, Dagon spun immediately and moved across the area in an instant.

This time, Max was set and prepared for the strike that came.

His arm ached, and his whole body shook as the swing sent him flying through the air. The entire time Dagon was moving, he was preparing for another attack.

Two wind blades came at the King as Max twisted, using a wind wall and wind magic to change his direction.

Unlike many of the opponents he had faced, who seemed to sense things, Dagon didn't appear to.

Then again, it didn't matter, as both wind blades struck the dwarf and didn't do a thing.

"You've got to try harder!"

Even as the King came at him, unleashing attack after attack, moving with a speed that left Max struggling to keep up, the dwarf could speak and coach him.

"You're too slow!"

"Don't block that!"

"Dip, dive, or dodge!"

His regeneration was working overtime. Every strike he blocked almost broke his arm, and he knew that Dagon had not yet activated a single skill.

Ice shards rained down, lighting bounced off the stone, boulders were batted away, and every single spell he or Bob sent at the King was ignored or deflected.

"You got ten seconds before I get serious!"

At that moment, as the King did a three-hit combo, using the bottom of his weapon to lift up Max's shield and then continuing the movement to drive the hammer into his chest, Max finally understood it all.

I'm going all out.

A switch inside him flipped, and Max let loose as the bones in his chest popped back into place.

He could see the King smile. A grin appeared at that moment.

'FINALLY!"

[Berserker]

[Ultimate Form]

Even as Max's body grew and the flow of the battle shifted, his speed finally kept pace with Dagon's. Not once did the dwarf lose his apparent joy at what was taking place.

Max's shield had gone, replaced by a sword he had crafted for Everett, which would be given to him soon. Max's main weapon shifted forms, taking on the shape of a slightly longer one-handed sword version.

Gone was his defensive mode, and now he went all out, unleashing combo after combo upon the King.

Two strikes led to four, then six, and soon, in the span of less than a second, over a dozen attacks had been launched at the dwarf he finally stood taller than.

Yet Dagon simply shifted his stance, the hammer spinning and twisting, each movement just the right amount, blocking and parrying each attack.

Shouting, Max did another salvo and then changed things up at the last second.

[Demonic Teleportation]

He appeared behind the King, both swords slicing at his neck to take it off.

The dwarf’s body flashed green, and when the blades struck, they bounced off harmlessly.

“YES!”

Dagon spun around, his hammer coming from below, forcing Max to jump away to avoid taking that hit to his body.

Time was his enemy in some ways, with Berserker wearing off but he didn’t care.

Don’t hold back!

[Rampage]

[Power Strike]

[Magical Strike]

[Ghost Strike]

His weapon moved, and Dagon faltered. His chance to parry missed as the ghost strike appeared, and Max’s weapon struck somewhere else.

Yet as his sword struck the chestplate, digging into it and drawing blood, Max felt pain like no other radiate through his entire body.

Bob immediately pulled him away with the wind magic.

Globs of blood fell onto the stone as he coughed, and his regeneration began to repair the damage to his torso.

What…

Something like Fowl’s. It reflected damage to us.

Once again, Dagon wasn’t waiting, ignoring the blood that ran down his chest and came at Max, his weapon glowing.

[Harden Body]

[Bulwark]

[Armored Warrior]

His shield came out, and Max tried to brace it as much as possible.

A light seemed to flash before him as the hammer struck, and all the pain he had felt before was there. Then, it was over.

[Negate Death Blow]

The only pain he now felt was the one inside his chest, and even that was basically gone.

“How in the–”

Dagon seemed surprised, and for the first time, Max understood the difference in power between whatever the King had thrown at him and what he could do.

Storing both the shield and weapon, he bull-rushed the dwarf, locking onto him.

[Weakness]

[Demonic Magic]

Both resisted, yet he continued grappling with the dwarf, who did not allow him to swing his weapon.

“Let go, you fool,” the King grunted.

Seven attempts later, his spell finally made it through.

Immediately, Dagon’s ability to hold his own against Max's current strength was lessened as weakness took over.

Without waiting, he summoned his own weapon, forming it into a spiked gauntlet around his hand and forearm. Large curved blades and spikes were on his oversized fist, and he began to punch over and over the King.

Each blow caused him to experience pain, yet he ignored it, taking the damage in stride, letting his Regeneration skill do what it could to help stop the blood that gushed forth with each breath.

“You’re tougher than I thought,” Dagon muttered as they struggled against each other. “Lots of surprises as well. Still, it’s not enough.”

As his gauntleted fist approached the dwarf’s helm again, an explosion of power from the King sent him flying.

Light radiated from Dagon’s entire being.

Some sort of… I don’t know. I can recall it but not exactly. I think it’s an effect he gets for being who he is—the King.

Each step the dwarf took made the stone shake, and as he ran at Max, holding the hammer back in both hands and swinging it, the same smile as before was there.

***

His head hurt, and it took him a moment to understand what had just happened.

“That was one heck of a fight.”

Blinking, Max saw the extended hand of the King standing beside him.

“I guess that means I died.”

Nodding and chuckling, the dwarf helped him up.

“That you did, but how you fought was impressive. You seemed unsure of yourself at first but thankfully learned to get past that. Had I known how much you have inside you, I probably would have waited to see what other tricks you have, but still, congrats for lasting longer than the rest.”

“Thanks… I think.”

Laughing, Dagon shook his head.

“No, don’t take it lightly. I had to use a skill I get only because I’m the King. None of my Guard have ever made me use it. So know that you did something special. I can see why Ockrim likes you.”

“Then how do I beat that skill?”

Shaking his head, the dwarf shrugged.

“You’ll have to figure that out on your own. Just know that each race has that ability… or well, they did. When Molly and Macie took the throne, it was lost. Whatever happened to it, no one knows.”

“So that means Savantus Gilmenor has one as well?”

Dagon nodded and frowned. “I can’t tell you what his does as no one knows exactly. We don’t go around sharing that kind of information. All I can tell you is whatever it does, it’s dangerous. If you underestimate him, you’ll die in a fight.”

“What about if you two fought?”

A few seconds passed as the dwarf scratched his beard.

“I don’t know. Neither of us wants to test that and each knows that if we fought head to head, most of the people we care about would die. Right now, I’m in trouble because I don’t have any children, and that means this skill will be lost forever when I die.”

“So he could wait you out.”

Dagon’s eye trembled slightly and his gaze fell to the ground. “My wife has told me to try and have a child with another dwarf, but I cannot do that to her. My love for her

is too great. To act like that would break me, and as we discussed earlier, the tower can steal enough of you already."

Standing there, Max had no idea what to say. He could sense the pain and hurt inside the dwarf next to him.

Instead, all he did was put a hand on his shoulder.

"Thank you for trusting me with that. I'll say a prayer for you."

Snorting and nodding, the older dwarf rubbed his nose.

"How about you stick this dagger in my eye instead so we can start this all over?"

In the King's hand was a jeweled weapon with runes on it, and it took him a few seconds to realize that Dagon wasn't joking.

"Uh… no one's going to be upset that I do it?"

"Gods, no. They would rather you do it than them. Trust me, someone always loses when we duel, and I've seen my proud warriors bargain for others to do this job. None of them likes knowing they killed me, even if it's not permanent."

"Okay, but… uh… sorry?"

"Just get it over with."

The King leaned forward and held his eye open as wide as possible.

After a quick breath, Max plunged it into the eye.

Three times, Dagon jerked and then went still. He gently laid the dwarf down on the stone floor and pulled the dagger free.

A few seconds passed, and then a groan came from the King.

"Gods, I forgot how bad that feels. Still, I owe you."

"Owe me what?"

"Another arse kicking! That's the perk of being the winner. You get to do it again."

Laughing, Dagon slapped him on the arm and pointed at the starting spot.

"Now, this time, don't hold back, and let's see if you can't do better. I'll try to hold off using my trump card, but know I'm not against it."

***

"Are you two okay?" Batrire asked as Max and Dagon arrived in the area they were waiting.

"We're fine, sister. You saw the fights. Neither of us is injured, and this last time, I think Max proved himself. Even made me use my special skill much earlier than I anticipated."

“Killed by the King,” Fowl muttered. “What an honor.”

“Bah, if you think it’s that great I can go out there and squish you real quick,” Dagon replied.

“Uh… never mind… Perhaps I misspoke.”

The King nodded and then pointed at a door where a pair of guards were.

“I am late, and they will see you out. I was told to tell you to get back into the tower, and when you think you’re ready to try again, we can return here and see if you’re right.”

“Thank you, my king,” Max said as he bowed.

“Bah, don’t go making me get misty-eyed again,” Dagon replied as he turned. “And get back in that tower! It’s an order from your king!”

After the dwarf had left the room, all four of his party clambered around him, questions flying simultaneously.

“Wait… wait… I promise to answer them all!” Max cried out. “What I really need right now is something to drink and eat.”

***

Sitting on his throne, Dagon paid only half attention to the reports being read and the petitions that were brought before him. Decades had taught him how to split his mind and manage these tasks while thinking about other things.

If that boy ever masters what he has and gets stronger, he might actually defeat the tower… that last fight… for that one moment… he almost had me.

“Uh, my liege, is something funny?”

Without breaking his expression, Dagon nodded.

“Yes… every day, you waste time on these things, and I tell you the same thing every day. Perhaps I might need to find a new dwarf to handle some affairs.”

At that moment, a new experience was granted to those who were gathered.

The sound of a grown dwarf fainting is rarely heard.

That day, all those gathered had the rare chance to hear it.

Links

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[None]

[F5] 49/455(1) Chapter 455 - A Weird Request

[F5] Next Chapter: 2025-05-21 15:02

[2025-05-20 15:12] [F5] 1)
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2295009/chapter-455-a-weird-request**; (1[this.Waybak=1 2025-05-21 15:06],[word.Waybak=1 2025-05-21 15:06],[Wayback_first2025-05-21 15:06],[Waybak_Last2025-05-21 15:06],[this.Fav2025-05-21 15:02], [this.word2025-05-21 15:02],[publish2025-05-21 15:02], [this.Last_edit2025-05-21 15:02])Chapter 455 - A Weird Request - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link [L1],[L2]]

Chapter 455 - A Weird Request

Max couldn’t help but grin as Dagon appeared through the door.

“Not even a day… I guess you really do like getting your arse kicked.”

“Actually, I have a favor, and these four are a bit anxious if you can’t tell.”

Motioning to his friends, Max waited until the King stood beside him.

“We talked last night after what you put me through, and we all realized they need to get better as well. It’s not like we haven’t trained before, but as you said, those other fields aren’t like this. If you’re willing, I’d like to borrow some of your elite Guard and have them fight against me and, finally, the five of us against you.”

Dagon’s hand slowly reached up and ran his fingers through his beard.

“That is an interesting opportunity not just for you but also for my warriors. Is there a limit to how often you wish to do this?”

“A day? Maybe two tops? We need to get back to the tower, but I think we both agree that doing this would help us prepare for such a thing.”

Slowly, the King’s head began to bob, and his grin grew as he faced the other four.

“So you’re all on board with this? Knowing you’re going to die and experience pain like never before?”

“Max is right,” Fowl stated. “We need to learn to fight like our lives depend on it, and we can’t hold back. If you’re willing, it would be an honor for all of us to face your Guard and yourself.”

Sniffing once, Dagon pretended to wipe a tear from his eye before winking.

“Remember that when I crush you beneath my hammer, but the honor is mine more than you know, Fowl Hammerfall. Now then, go get prepared, and I’ll summon my guard. You five are in for the beating of a lifetime.”

“And you’re certain that Tanila dying and our child will be safe?” Max asked.

The king nodded.

“Ockrim ensured the first king who was given this room that no one would suffer any consequences, including a pregnant woman. As you know, we dwarves are used to fighting alongside our wives even when they are with a child.”

***

Max grimaced, hearing Dagon make a noise like he had been punched when Tanila’s ice spear tore through the midsection of the guard she had been facing.

“She’s improving,” the King muttered. “If I’m right, she’s the next strongest one. Your archer is tough, especially with that pet and her bow, and Fowl is a different kind of warrior. It’s your healer who is lacking.”

Gazing from behind the crystal window, Max nodded.

“Honestly, if Tanila and I went all out, I’m certain it would be a good fight. We just have never done it.”

He could feel Dagon frown and turn toward him.

“Neither of you has done that because you're afraid of hurting each other. Is it because she carries your child?”

He couldn’t help but blink a few times.

“You know?”

“Boy, I’m old, not ignorant. I can tell what a baby bump looks like. I’ve kept my mouth shut as I won’t even imagine what you must deal with, having both the woman you love and your child in the tower. Still, if you want to keep her safe, help her be the strongest she can be. If that means the two of you need to fight, then do so.”

“How… how do you hit the one you love?”

Laughter echoed through the room as Dagon pointed a hand toward the combat taking place below.

“Everyone in that room I love like a child. It hurts when I crush one of my warriors beneath my hammer, but I also know it makes them stronger. You mean more to me than any human ever has because I see in you something only rare stories from long

ago speak about. A man who cares about everyone and doesn't see race. You, Max Hoste, see people. I'm guessing your heart has gotten you in more trouble than you would want to admit."

Nodding slowly, he looked at the fight between Cordellia and a caster, watching the dwarf continually block the attacks from her bow while keeping her wolf at bay. It was a close fight, and if things continued the way they were going, she would probably lose against this dwarf.

"Tell me, do you really love her?"

Dagon's eyes looked hard when he turned to face the King.

"I mean, you know that I do."

"No," the dwarf replied as he shook his head. "No, I don't. Because if you loved her and were committed to what you say you are, you would go out there and crush her. You wouldn't hold back. Every ability you threw at me you would throw at her. Maybe not at first, but the fight between you two must be ugly and nasty. Each of you must scrape and claw to win. Neither of you can allow yourself to hold back. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

"I'm not sure if she can do that… I'm not sure if I can do that…"

He felt the oversized hand on his shoulder and the gentle squeeze from it.

Dagon's tone was softer, like a father trying to give advice to his son.

"Then you're not ready to face the tower. Because if you can't, someone will die… and if she is the one that does…"

The King took a large breath and let it out slowly.

"If she is the one who dies, I'm afraid for everyone else around you."

He's right, Max. You need to do this for both of you.

The war of his heart and mind raged, but hearing a King who had lived hundreds of years and had a skill he knew was even older tell him the same thing finally tipped the scales.

Shaking his head, Max frowned but nodded.

"You're right. I'll do it."

No smile came from Dagon, who gave him one more squeeze and nodded.

"Then go show me how much you love her."

***

"You're serious… I mean… you don't understand what you're asking from me."

Max shook his head and held Tanila's hand, not letting her pull it away. He could see the pain on her face and the fear behind her trembling eyes.

“I am, and I do—Dagon’s right. Every time my spell hits you and you bleed, I will feel it ten times. When I kill you, my heart is going to break, but I know I’m going to have to do it multiple times. Eventually, you must be willing to embrace what is inside you and use the power you don’t want. Because if you don’t and the day comes when we need it and you hesitate, it might make the difference between someone in our party living or dying, maybe even our child.”

Her free hand went to her stomach, and a frown grew upon those perfect lips.

“The power… the way it feels… you know how it grows.”

“I do,” Max replied. “And I also know you’re stronger. Like you were there for me, I’ll be here for you. Face me as Tanila Gilmenor, Elven Princess and owner of a red skill. Do not be afraid to hurt me because, as you’ve seen, death doesn’t matter. All that is important is learning to overcome and grow.”

Tanila made a raspberry sound as she blew the air out of her lungs.

“Gods, sometimes you sound so smart… and you’re certain you want me to do this?”

“I need you to. Just like you, I need to learn not to hold back.”

Her face grew hard as her jaw muscles tightened and she nodded.

“Fine, then prepare yourself for the arse-kicking of a lifetime.”

Max laughed as she winked at him and turned away, moving to the spot she would start on.

Part of me is looking forward to this.

And the other part?

I am not sure how this is going to go down.

***

The horn sounded, and Max dashed in, sensing walls of air appear and dodging them. The moment he moved, his spell came down.

Her new ability allowed her to teleport out of the way of his lightning bolt. A wave of ice was washing out from around her as a Fire Nove started to join it.

She’s improved a lot!

Multiple spells were being cast simultaneously, yet he knew she wasn’t serious because her eyes and hair were not gold.

Do it. Don’t hold back. Show her the way.

Clenching his jaw, Max nodded and allowed Bob to unleash every spell they had.

Sand and stone dropped from his inventory, turning into daggers and flying after the woman he loved.

Her face changed, and as the first spell of his to land cut her, he could see that she wasn’t going to play anymore.

Her hair and eyes quickly changed, and the gold glow started to radiate from her.

Yet Max didn’t let up, knowing she should have started like that and not waited to use it.

He closed the distance again, trying to catch her as she blinked in and out of space all around him.

Each time, his sonar told him where she was, and the problem wasn’t finding her. It was actually reaching her.

I’ve got this but you need to–

[Blink]

When the spell he had been sensing dropped its load, ice fell from the roof of the room, over half of it covered in a cloud that continued to spread out. Each one was only the size of his hand and as thick as a piece of hay, but hundreds of thousands of them fell in a torrential downpour.

[Demonic Teleportation]

Almost a hundred of them were impaled in his upper body as he barely made it to the edge of the storm. Slowly, his body pushed them out as Regeneration did its thing, but he could feel the power of her magic grow.

You need to get close and end this. We both know there are ways to minimize or avoid this spell, but the goal is to make both of you stop holding back.

Max sighed as he moved along the floor, watching the spell continue to reduce the safety of the area he was in.

Strike her down. Do it because she needs to see what an opponent who wants her dead would do. If you need to, pretend it’s her sister, mother, or father.

Immediately, he changed his direction and ran toward the woman he loved, shield held above him and his sword out by his side.

[Berserker]

[Ultimate Form]

[Harden Skin]

[Bulwark]

[Armored Warrior]

[Evasion]

[Rampage]

[Power Strike]

[Magical Strike]

Time slowed as he came at her, his shield sending cascades of ice shards everywhere.

He could see the change in her face, the tightening of her jaw as she once again used her new ability to change positions.

Bob was prepared, immediately casting his root ability and ice prison simultaneously.

Tanila had the same idea, using an ice prison on him, but his step never slowed as he changed direction. The woman he loved was now unable to move as both spells started to hold her in place.

Elemental walls appeared before him, and Max simply plowed through them, each one shattering under his charge. As the last few steps came, his sword swung downward and across.

The slightest frown began to form as his blade cut her in half.

Immediately, the storm began to vanish, and Max stopped on a gold coin, storing his weapon and shield. He caught the woman he loved as her eyes dimmed for a moment.

Seconds ticked away as ice daggers bounced off his oversized body and hardened skin. Yet, in his arms, he carefully held the woman he loved.

Finally, she spoke.

“Gods that sucked.”

The most enormous sigh he could ever remember letting out came right before he kissed her forehead.

“Yes, it did.”

Her golden eyes looked up at him, and he saw a fire growing in them.

“You need to let me go.”

“What? Why?”

“Because if you don’t get off of me and let me stand up, I’m not going to be able to kick your arse this next time.”

Max couldn’t help but laugh as he stood, his body still dwarfing her as his Ultimate Form was active.

“Sure you will. I’d offer to wager on it, but I can see you won’t hold back this next time.”

Tanila shook her head and wiped off her robe.

“No, this time I’m not.”

Links

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[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/amazon/B0DXWFDW7K

[L2] https://www.royalroadcdn.com/public/covers-large/79779-lost-souls-and-a-demoness-a-litrpg-adventure.jpg?time=1739386411

[F5] 50/456(1) Chapter 456 - The Fight of a Lifetime

[F5] Next Chapter: 2025-05-22 15:02 [2025-05-21 15:04] [F5] 1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2297432/chapter-456-the-fight-of-a-lifetime**;50/456(1[this.Waybak=1 2025-05-22 15:05],[word.Waybak=1 2025-05-22 15:05], [Wayback_first2025-05-22 15:05],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-22 15:04],[this.word2025-05-22 15:07],[publish2025-05-22 15:02], [this.Last_edit2025-05-22 15:02])Chapter 456 - The Fight of a Lifetime - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1,L2]

Chapter 456 - The Fight of a Lifetime

“You two need to take a break!” Dagon shouted as he moved toward Tanila and Max. “Neither of you realize it, but you’re caught in a loop that sometimes happens here.”

It took a little effort not to glare as Max watched the King walk toward him.

“What do you mean?”

“You’ve fought twenty times straight. Twice she came close, yet not once have you lost. Tell me Tanila Gilmenor, do you feel like you’ve improved.”

Her gold hair shimmered, and she also seemed to glare at the dwarven King for a moment before the aura she was giving off lessened.

“I… have.”

With a wave of her hand, the power that exuded from her vanished, and her hair returned to the red color Max enjoyed so much.

“Which is the point of all this. Others still need to fight and learn to get better. You two have hogged this place for too long. Sit back and think about what each of you have learned. Even better, go find a corner somewhere and spend some time kissing one another.”

Max felt his cheeks turn a little red as he glanced out of the corner of his eye and saw that Tanila had also done the same.

“I’m sorry… what?”

Snorting, Dagon pointed up to the area to watch from.

“You two have been going all out. I’ve seen the look in your eyes. Sometimes rage and anger, and occasionally borderline hatred. How many times did you use the skill?”

He could feel the gulp that Tanila took as the King stared at her.

“Seventeen,” she replied, her voice almost trembling momentarily.

“And each time, how did it feel? Glorious? Like you wanted to use it over and over?”

She nodded slowly.

“Trust me. I understand. The ability that I get for being the King is easily ten times more intoxicating. Perhaps that’s why we dwarves drink so much. It is to learn how to avoid giving in to the desire, but my father warned me countless times that I would want to use it constantly if I didn’t learn to control it. He was right. You need to learn that as well, and I think you’re finally starting to get there.”

Just as Max was about to speak, Dagon pointed a thick finger at him.

“And you, Max Hoste, held back far too often. While I understand allowing her to cast and get better, at least four times I know that you toyed with her like a cat and mouse. It went beyond training and into the realm of being wrong. Just like when we tease someone we love, we often know the limit we can go and try never to pass it. You and I know you were very close to that line, if not over it.”

Nodding, Max knew the dwarf was right. Caught up in the bloodlust of all this and the sensation of knowing a life was his to take at any moment, he had done just that.

“Forgive me, my love. I shouldn’t have done that.”

Tanila nodded and shrugged.

“I probably should ask for a little forgiveness as well. Some of those words I said.”

Each of them started to laugh and then clasped hands.

“Good. Now that you two remember you love each other, leave this room. I have work to do, and everyone else needs to train before tomorrow. I’ll give you three fights against me, and that’s it.”

***

Fowl pushed back his seventh plate of food and uttered a loud burp. “Excuse me.”

“You really can’t say that when you do it every five minutes,” Batrire stated.

Cordellia laughed and then mimicked their warrior's utterance, letting her belch last a little longer.

“I tell you, these elves grow on me daily,” Fowl muttered.

Max couldn’t help but smile as they stared at the pile of plates before them.

“It would appear that you all put in some work today,” Erwini muttered as she sipped from her cup. “Some Faction leaders might get upset about a party coming in and consuming this much food, but the other part of me wishes I could watch tomorrow's fight.”

“It’s not our place to invite, and I’m also certain that Dagon doesn’t want his ability to be witnessed any more than it has to.”

“Dagon. You just toss that name around like he’s one of your dwarven-drinking buddies… Still, I know you’re right. Even if it pains me, some humans and elves get to fight in a place most would give both arms just to visit.”

“Trust me, it hurts… a lot,” their archer stated as she picked up another chicken leg. “Who knew dying could feel so bad.”

Chuckles came from everyone at the table, each of them having experienced the pain dozens of times.

“So are you going to stay here and tower climb afterward or return home?”

“We may try the tower here and see what it offers. I appreciate you not prodding too much, as we can’t discuss it. If we could, we would.”

“Oh, I understand,” the Faction leader for this city replied. “Honestly, that makes it a little scarier. You’re the first group in a long time to reach those levels, and it answers so many questions. It also helps me understand why the King poaches all of the good talent. To be able to reach that level and join his Guard is a special thing.”

The sound of another belch from Fowl and his tankard banging against the table rang out through the dining hall.

“I’m going to bed. Tomorrow’s going to be a day where I die quickly, I’m afraid. As such, I want to sleep a little.”

Nods came from everyone as their warrior stood up and held out his hand to Batrire.

“You coming, babe?”

“Not that tired, are you?”

Max saw his friend wink back at their healer and shake his head.

“I’m never that tired.”

As the two of them took off laughing, he motioned in their direction to Tanila.

“It’s not a contest, you know,” she muttered as she started to stand.

“Oh, I know, because if it was, I’m definitely the winner.”

***

“Remember the plan,” Max whispered as the five of them stood in position.

“Yeah, I got it,” Fowl muttered. “Let myself get beat to a bloody pulp.”

“Don’t worry, I’m certain we’ll all get a turn,” Tanila stated.

Dozens of Dagon’s Elite Guard were watching from above, and it looked like all of them were excited as they leaned forward and shouted.

“Let’s have fun!” the King called out. “And remember, you only get three chances! No holding back!”

The glow of Tanila’s hair left no doubt they would do anything like that.

As the horn sounded, everyone moved.

Fowl activated his Juggernaut ability and charged forward, his shield out and crashed into the King.

Max transformed into his Ultimate Form and was already in berserker mode, blinking behind their foe.

Tanila and Bob started the barrage of spells while using their crowd-control ones, trying to get one to stick.

A purple wolf joined the fray as their ranger unleashed arrows at the King’s feet.

Within the first few seconds of combat starting, the chaos was a frenzy of spells, attacks, and shouts.

Batrire’s heals never stopped pouring out as Fowl and Dagon seemed to be caught in some feedback of a thorn aura, each causing damage to the other from their warrior's initial charge.

Unlike last time, Max focused on the king's shoulders and arms, not trying to hit his back, as attacking there seemed to cause more damage than the other places.

Still, he was bleeding, and each time he drew blood, the aura Dagon had returned the favor.

“Taunt!”

A groan came from the King as Fowls’s ability went off.

“I’m not that stupid!”

The massive hammer continued to rain down blows on Fowl, each time suffering damage as the warrior blocked them, continuing the thorn feedback.

Say when…

Not yet.

Each attempt to hold the older dwarf in place with the root or binding spells lasted not even a fraction of a second, but they did slow down Dagon’s ability to move slightly.

Arrows bounced off his armor, but occasionally, one or two would find a weak spot, and Max watched their archer's health decrease after a successful strike.

Tanila’s big spell was coming, and when he saw her nod, he stored both weapons and grabbed the King from behind.

A twenty-foot-long, four-foot-wide chunk of ice raced at Dagon and struck him in the chest.

Max roared when he saw the dwarf’s armor flash a few colors, and Tanila immediately fell to the ground.

“Not good enough!”

He could sense the arrows but couldn’t do anything about it.

The golden light came, and right before he was tossed away, two arrows struck the eye slots of the king. Cordellia fell dead from the feedback of the damage.

Fowl’s hit points had almost been gone after the first strike, and nly Batrire’s healing had kept him alive to endure two more before their warrior was flattened beneath the hammerhead.

Max tried to stop Dagon, but the King was on their healer so fast.

Her barrier appeared, and laughter erupted across the room.

The older dwarf turned and threw something at him.

A weird metal ball that glowed came at him faster than anything he’d seen before, and Max watched it destroy everything Bob had put in its path to slow it down.

[Demonic Teleportation]

His sonar told him that the object had shifted direction and was still coming at him.

It collided with his shield just as he got it into place, and then, the next moment, he realized he was being dragged toward the King.

The sound of laughter grew louder, and a quick glance at Dagon revealed a weird grin on his face. His expression felt familiar.

He’s enjoying this.

That thought was Max's last one before the hammer caught his shield.

***

“Not a bad fight. You made me use a few tricks I rarely show.”

Still rubbing his bald head, Max let out a groan.

The plan’s working—one more fight.

Yeah… but I mean, I’m the one getting beat up.

Ohh, I feel it, too, in a way.

“Thanks, I think,” he replied, taking the hand held out to him. “What was that object you threw at me?”

“Some things are old relics, and this hammer is one of them. Just know it’s part of it, and the fact I used it means a lot, as none of those in the area above have ever seen me use it.”

A godly weapon? Or an artifact?

Possibly. Still it seemed to draw us to the hammer and we couldn’t dodge that object. A potential item to consider making if we can one day.

His friends all moved to where he and Dagon stood.

“So, you all ready for the next fight or need a moment to prepare and discuss things?”

“If you’re willing, we’ll take a minute to talk,” Tanila replied.

“Take five. I need a drink, but be ready when the horn sounds. As always, I’m coming for you.”

Watching the King walk to a door where they knew a few kegs of ale were, everyone huddled together.

“That was painful,” Cordellia stated. “Every time I hit him, I got hurt. Just how strong is his ability?”

“It’s higher than mine,” Fowl replied. “Imagine that but never stopping. Ours seemed to reflect the reflected damage multiple times.”

“Yup, and it made me have to work hard,” Batrire informed them. “By the way, he saved me for last, which means I won the bet.”

A grunt came from their warrior and archer, who each handed over a gold coin to her.

Max snapped his fingers to get everyone's attention.

“Okay, plan B this time. He showed a few more things, and I’m betting he is hiding a couple more.”

“You really think it’s best to wait till the third time to try our last plan? I mean, if we fail, that’s it.”

“Cordellia, let me ask you a question. Do you think we have any other options? We’ll only get one chance; if it works, we can win. If it doesn’t… Well, we’ll all be dead anyways.”

“The plan seemed good last night,” Tanila said. “I don’t see how it’s going to change. All we can do now is adapt, and I, for one, want to kick his dwarven arse.”

“Hey! That’s my king!” Fowl exclaimed. “If anyone’s kicking his arse, it should be a dwarf!”

Links

//2025-05-22 15:07

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/77111/the-survivor-game-litrpg-from-zero-to-op

[L2] https://www.royalroadcdn.com/public/covers-large/77111-the-survivor-game-a-survivalist-battle-royale.jpg?time=1701187482

[F5] 51/457(1) Chapter 457 - Going All Out

[F5] Next Chapter: 2025-05-23 15:02 [2025-05-22 15:08] [F5] 1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2299944/chapter-457-going-all-out**;51/457(1[this.Waybak=1 2025-05-23 15:02],[word.Waybak=1 2025-05-23 15:02],[Wayback_first2025-05-23 15:02],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-23 15:02],[this.word2025-05-23 15:02],[publish2025-05-23 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-23 15:02])Chapter 457 - Going All Out - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1, L2]

Chapter 457 - Going All Out

“That was disappointing,” Dagon complained as he looked at the five of them. “You didn’t press the attack at all. All you did was create a battle of attrition with someone you must have realized by now heals on their own. Why?”

“You said it already,” Fowl replied. “The damage from your aura kills them if they hit you too hard. Poison didn’t work and all we could do was try and see how long you could last.”

The King’s frown lessened slightly as he nodded.

“Still, you did get me to show another trick. Once more, you’re making me do things I haven’t had to do in ages, and I can’t complain about that. Five minutes again?”

Max nodded and the older dwarf turned and made his way back toward the drinking area.

“He’s right, that sucked so bad,” Batrire stated. “I feel like I was the one who worked the most, having to keep everyone healed. Even with the new group healing spell, I would run out like I did.”

“You’re fine,” Tanila said, giving her friend a hip bump. “Max’s plan showed us what we needed to see. Everything rides on this last attempt. I mean, did we honestly believe we could take down the King?”

Shaking his head from side to side, Max knew the odds had been low from the start.

It still feels weird to know there are people out here stronger than me. I mean… I shouldn’t think that but I did.

This is why, in some ways, we should be grateful to Ockrim for having this moment for us and also be cautious about who we might face. The King and his god are correct. We need to get into the tower and get stronger. Eventually, something will have to give us the stats and skills we desire. Lately, I’ve felt so hungry.

You're not going to go all murder crazy again, are you?

No, but I might request you kill a bunch of creatures in the coming floors.

He sensed everyone looking at him and knew there was a grin on his face. Tapping his temple, Max winked.

“So we’ll follow the plan. Whatever happens next, just know I can’t keep doing it repeatedly. And Bob’s right. We need to get into the tower and get stronger. If we’ve learned one thing, it’s that we’re not as powerful as we thought.”

***

Max knew he was smiling.

Next to him was his Mirror Image, and the fact that he was stealthed and it wasn’t made the whole plan possible.

Dagon already looked slightly nervous as his use of Ultimate Form two times in a row after Bob had refreshed it had caused him to grow even more.

If he hesitates like the last fight… we can do this.

Even if he doesn’t, you should be able to win this battle if your attack goes as planned.

“I’m not going to lie. I really feel like you’ve been holding back. I guess I won’t either!”

A groan from Fowl was evident as the King had that same orb appear as before and placed it on the bottom of the shaft. Then, with some effort, the weapon split into two hammers, and the king held a matching pair of weapons that were no doubt better than any weapon they owned.

“Max…”

“Stick with the plan. It doesn’t change a thing,” he whispered from stealth to his friend. “Charge him. I’ll do the rest.”

“Ready?!”

As the call came out, each of them nodded, including Max’s clone.

His body ached from the power and strength it tried to contain.

Finally, Dagon moved his head, and the horn sounded.

Like the first fight, Fowl charged ahead, but Tanila summoned a large boulder this time and sent it at the King from the left while Cordellia unleashed a rain of arrows. Max’s mirror image charged right behind Fowl on the right side, trying to hedge the dwarf in.

[Blink]

[Berserker]

[Power Strike]

[Spell Burst]

[Dimensional Space]

Appearing behind Dagon and still in stealth, Max ripped open the door to his vault, and Bob unleashed the largest gust of wind blades he could from the front.

Only a single step was required for the King to find himself in the space, and since he had never reacted to any attack that showed he had some detection skills, Max prayed silently that his hunch was correct.

The largest door possible was open, and he stood inside at the edge and bent down, wrapping his hands around the King’s waist. Fowl plowed right into him with two shields.

Before words could be uttered, the dwarf lifted upward and was slammed to the ground inside the space.

“What the–”

Max didn’t hesitate, spinning to his feet, the thick rope he had acquired from Igarra’s world in his hand, and began wrapping the dwarf up as fast as possible, ignoring the first few swings that came in his direction.

A rumbling sound started to ring out, but beyond that, nothing happened, and in seconds, the King of the Dwarves found himself tied up and unable to move.

“Where… a dimensional space?! You have such a thing?!”

Max chuckled and nodded.

“I do and if I’m correct, nothing you’re trying to do is working.”

A low growl and grunt came as the King struggled against the bonds. Anytime he tried to move forward, Max simply put his hands against his chest and held the dwarf in place.

“That’s… genius boy!”

Gone was the frown and a smile appeared as Dagon glanced around the empty area.

“You set me up! Made me feel like this was going to be easy, and you finally went all out! I’m proud of you!”

His friends were all moving inside the space and each of them had a look of satisfaction plastered across their faces.

“It worked… it actually worked,” Fowl said. “I mean… I hoped it would.”

“Yes… you win. Something tells me if you wanted, you could easily kill me in here, but I doubt I would find myself alive again to congratulate you for doing so.”

He’s right… oh the power… how a part of me would love to do this.

And yet we won’t.

I know… I’m just saying.

A chuckle in his head was the last thing Bob said as Max began to unwind the rope.

“I wasn’t sure I’d be able to lift you up if I’m honest. Part of me knew you had abilities that stopped that, so I had to try to ensure you didn’t activate them.”

“A good plan,” Dagon replied. “Still, part of me feels cheated, but the other part knows you five have done well.”

With the King no longer bound, Max and the others turned toward the entrance of the dimensional space where dwarves were starting to appear, a few with weapons in their hands.

“I’m fine! They won! You all can relax.”

A few gave them some glares, but most looked surprised to hear that their King had been defeated.

“Come, let’s get a drink, and then I’ll let you return to the tower. Something tells me I will never hear the end of this from my warriors.”

***

After a short time with the King and his Guard, Max and the others were back on the 62nd floor.

“We’re ready for this,” Fowl said with a grin. “No hiding in a vault or worried about how fast we go.”

“For now,” Cordellia replied. “He can always go back afterward and get us a faster time.”

Listening to the banter, Max kissed Tanila. “You know I love you.”

“Says the man who killed me twenty times.”

He ignored her tease and pulled her closer. “Well, you killed me the first days I laid eyes on you.”

Rolling her eyes, Tanila shook her head. “How about you focus on today and worry about tonight later.”

Moving to where Fowl was standing, he shrugged. “Who says we’ll be out of here by tonight?”

“Wait, what?!” their warrior exclaimed. “You mean we might be in here for a whole day? Why didn’t someone tell me so I could have used the bathroom beforehand?!”

Laughter came from everyone but Fowl as they started moving down the slippery, muddy floor.

***

The large tunnel they were in split into two, one going right and one going left. A horrible stench came from both directions and neither seemed to have a better outlook compared to the other.

“So, which way?” Cordellia asked.

“I’m always a fan of going to the right,” Batrire said.

“So we’ll go left,” Tanila teased.

Max stayed near the trio as Fowl took point, watching his dwarven friend take careful steps as the slipperiness of the path got worse.

“It’s like we’re walking in a goo of some kind,” their mage stated. “It’s not like normal mud as you don’t sink like I would expect one to.”

“Which means it's a special place, the tower created just for us.”

His comment didn’t seem to get the hoped response, but Max didn’t care.

For the first time in a while, it felt good to watch his friends take part in a tower floor like this. Each of them was focused and always on the lookout for something.

A gentle wind blew at them a hundred yards after taking the path they had chosen, and the stench grew much worse.

“Smells like rotten flesh,” Batrire said after almost gagging. “And a lot of it.”

“The path is starting to descend,” Fowl called out. “Be careful.”

As if fate disliked being told what to do, a cry came twenty-five yards later as their warrior slid down the slope.

“Goblin shite!”

Max raced toward his friend and realized that he could only catch up to him by flying.

Bob took care of that. He zoomed downward and grabbed hold of the warrior, now covered in brown mud.

“Bah, it’s in my mouth!”

“Then stop talking, and it won’t be!”

As his friend started spitting, Max sensed movement up ahead.

From the side of the walls, shapes started to form.

“Golems!”

Flying back to his friends with their warrior in tow, he made sure they were far enough away from the incline that no one else would take a turn.

“At least five!”

Fowl stopped complaining and took out his shield and weapon. He watched the creatures that started to appear from below, the yellow light causing their wet shapes to glisten.

A large fireball appeared above Tanila, and she let it loose, striking the first one in the head and causing it to stumble backward.

Cordellia followed her lead, sending flaming arrow after arrow at the incoming group.

They fought as one, Max doing his best not to hog all the glory and letting Fowl tank the first few to get past their offensive onslaught.

Each fell quickly as they worked together, fire being one of the strongest weapons against them. It dried out the wet mud and allowed them to locate the core inside that would kill them once destroyed.

“Everyone talks about how a mud bath is fun, but I don’t think they ever had one like this,” Fowl muttered as he turned around, his entire front half dripping with it.

“No… that’s not what they enjoy,” Cordellia said, stifling a laugh. “Still, you did good, shorty.”

Spitting more mud out and removing most of his armor, their warrior started wiping his face and beard off with a towel.

“That wasn’t too bad. We just need to get past this slide part and see what lies beyond.”

“Are you offering to go?” Fowl asked Max.

“I can. I’m just pointing out the obvious.”

“Rather him than me,” their archer stated. “He’s the most capable, and we’d be fools to try and send anyone else.”

With that easy decision made, Max waited until everyone was ready and returned to the old way of tower floors, going out and bringing things back to his team.

Links

//[2025-05-23 15:02]

[L1] https://www.royalroadcdn.com/public/covers-large/shadow-clone-sorcery-135512.jpg?time=1747633698

[L2] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/117529/shadow-clone-sorcery

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[F5] 52/458(1) Chapter 458 - Floor 62 **[F5] Next Chapter: 2025-05-24 15:02**

[2025-05-23 15:02] [F5] 1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2302450/chapter-458-floor-62;52/458(1[this.Waybak=1 2025-05-26 9:38],[word.Waybak=1 2025-05-26 9:38],[Wayback_first2025-05-26 9:38],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-26 9:36],[this.word2025-05-26 9:48],[publish2025-05-24 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-24 15:02])**Chapter 458 - Floor 62 - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**

Chapter 458 - Floor 62

“Finally,” Fowl muttered as everyone stared at the portal in the chamber before them.

“Yeah, because a large room like this with nothing but it can’t be bad, can it?”

Their warrior gave Cordellia the middle finger as they stood just outside the entrance to a two-hundred-yard circular cave.

Thick, slimy mud caked each of them. Eventually, they gave up trying to clean it off, unable to prevent the stuff from finding its way onto their armor and clothes. It was only worth having Max remove it when they took a break to rest for a few hours.

“Two days… two days without a real bathroom. We’re so close I can feel it.”

“Feel what?”

A sinister smile appeared on Fowl’s lips. “The turtle… it’s ready to pop out of its shell.”

Groans came from each of them as Max tried to sense something with his sonar. As with every other time, nothing appeared until the mud golems began to form. Countless times they would walk along a tunnel only to have them appear before, in the middle, and behind them.

“I say we just run for it,” Tanila muttered. “If this place is anything like the other floor, we could face a hundred or more of those things.”

“Bah, Max can kill them all while running around in circles.”

Still frowning, he ignored his friend, knowing there was probably something boss-sized, if not lots of golems, waiting between them and the portal.

“I’m not saying I can’t kill them all alone. I’m more concerned with how we can do this as a group.”

“You’re seriously wanting us to fight?” Fowl asked.

Nodding, he pointed at the portal. “We can make a break for it, but time isn’t important. Our tunnel isn’t the greatest choke point, but we could limit the numbers that come through with a few barriers. From there it’s just the same thing as that tower floor with the minatours.”

“So you’re going to use your ability to change the earth again? That didn’t work at all like you hoped.”

Tanila was right. No matter how hard he worked, it was like trying to hold liquid in a bucket with holes.

“I still don’t see why we don’t just rush through and get out. No point worrying about this yet,” their archer said. “Fowl’s right. It’s been a long couple of days, and our fighting here doesn’t prove a point. And don’t start quoting that *we need to fight* crap as we’ve been doing that for days.”

Frustrated, he turned on them and pointed a finger at the two biggest complainers. “I’m not sure what’s crawled up your arses, but three days ago you wanted to fight. Now after a hard two days you suddenly want to just call it quits or have me do the rest of the floor. I won’t argue if that’s the whole group's decision, but why are you acting this way?”

“Because those fights weren’t easy and facing a hundred of them is impossible!” Cordellia yelled. “I’m not a coward and I’m not saying let’s go home, but I’m scared… Dagon’s room… it showed me the pain of dying and for some reason, I feel if we go in there and fight these as a group… someone will die.”

Her words caught him off guard and looking at his friend, he could see Fowl’s head moving slightly up and down. “I wouldn’t let you die.”

She snorted. “But that’s the thing. You couldn’t stop Dagon from killing us,” she replied, holding a hand up to stop him from talking. “Sure he’s the dwarven king and super strong, but be honest with yourself. Are you really willing to risk our lives to prove a point?”

Bob?

I’m not sure I should answer this. Look at them. All of them are a bit fearful. She’s just brave enough to tell you. She is also right. All it takes is one moment, one slip up, something to go wrong, and someone could die.

If there is a boss-like creature, and it does something you’re not prepared for, there may not be time to save one of them. So either walk in there and kill whatever might appear or carry them across to safety. Pushing this issue right now in this place isn’t going to solve anything.

“You’re right,” Max said. “I can’t promise I will always be able to protect you. But I’ll never stop trying.” He summoned his dimensional space and motioned to it. “Go ahead and get inside. I’ll take care of it.”

“Max–”

He turned as Cordellia said his name and held out her hand, ignoring her as he ran into the cave.

Sure enough, as he approached the portal, shapes began to form.

He closed his eyes, angry and frustrated at himself and a dozen other things.

You can help or not. Either way I’m going to destroy every one of these things.

There is no need to ask. I’m here to help.

***

[Tower Floor 63 Reached]

[Completion of Tower Floor 62 Achieved]

[Full Level of Tower Experience Granted]

[Calculating Results of Previous Floor]

[…]

[…]

[Results Totaled]

[Time Spent on Floor is within top 20%]

[Number of Kills on Floor is in top 20%]

[Calculating Rewards]

[No Rewards Earned]

Max sighed as he lifted his fingers off the crystal circle.

Even the calm sounds of the water crashing against the sand of the next tower floor couldn’t make him let go of his frustration.

“I’ll meet you all later. I need to go do something.”

He ignored their attempts at stopping him, thankful Tanila said nothing, her face showing she understood.

Outside of the tower, he immediately teleported outside of Aerthen's lair.

Go. I've got this.

Trying as hard as he could, Max closed his eyes and focused on breathing as Bob activated haste and flew like a star across the night sky.

He knew exactly which way Rakonath was and needed to be near him.

***

"I sensed you approaching me, so Aerthen told me to head to you."

Max sighed, content to lean against the silver scales of his dragon, the tip of Rakonath's tail draped over his leg.

"Thank you for coming. You saved me a few hours at least."

A low thrum came and a pair of silver eyes stared at him.

"I doubt that. You were moving much faster than I could. How you maintained that for so long is impressive. Even Aerthen said that she couldn't have caught you."

"Well, my friend helped. He knows how badly I wanted to see you."

"Tell him thank you… even though I know he can hear me."

A chuckle came inside his head, and Rakonath started to thrum again.

"Yes… I can sense that… Bob was it? Bob found that humerous."

"He can hear you, but don't worry. He likes you. I didn't pick that name to be kind the first time, but he's come to accept it. Now forget about all that. Tell me, what have you been up to? You've grown more than I thought in just a few weeks."

"Most of my growth is still because of the elf you fed me. I've almost absorbed most of it, and soon, I'll need to start seeking other creatures who can sustain me."

"You know, I can always get you more items."

Rakonath huffed. "While I appreciate the offer, I must also learn to provide for myself. I think what you are doing now is part of the problem you are suffering with the others."

Frowning, Max realized that his dragon had just hit the nail on the head. "Is it really bad that I'm offering to help?"

"No. But sometimes, you must let others rise and fall on their own."

Shaking his head, Max scratched at the scales on the tail and gazed into the giant silver eyes. "Are you able to read my thoughts? How do you know exactly what I'm dealing with?"

“Our connection shares some of the fragments. I can sense some of it like a bad dream, but it is unclear. You’re trying to get them to do something, and it didn’t go well, did it?”

Taking a deep breath, Max laid out everything that had happened in the last few days.”

***

“So what do you think?”

Rakonath’s thrum made his whole body move as the dragon shook his head.

“I think you need to figure this out on your own. Aerthen would tell me that some problems are best solved only by us, and having someone else do it prevents us from learning. You know the answer right now even if you do not want to admit it. There are countless paths to take, and yet, I believe you are able to see all of them.”

Giving the tail a gentle slap Max frowned. “You’re worse than Tanila sometimes. Bob, too.”

“Friends tell you what you need to hear, not what you want to hear in tough moments.”

Perhaps you need Aerthen to take you under her wing for a bit. It appears your dragon is wiser than most of your friends.

Returning his hand to the tail, Max scratched them again as he considered his options. “You know my greatest fear.”

“Being alone and losing everyone you love.”

It was as if Rakonath had taken a dagger and pierced his heart.

The truth of that statement made him rub his chest. “All I ever wanted was a simple life… and now all I want is to find a way to protect everyone I love.”

“Even the dragon must leave home. When they do, their mother does not chase after them. You must allow them to grow as they did when you were gone on that other world.”

Glancing toward the sun, which was starting to make its presence known, Max took a moment to enjoy the beauty of the small clearing they were relaxing in.

“I need to go back to them… you know that.”

“Yes,” Rakonath replied. “Do not worry about me. I am growing, and soon enough, I shall be able to join you in your adventures.”

“How soon are we talking about?”

“A few months, according to Aerthen. She says I should be safe with you, especially if I can take to the air. Her biggest concern is if the tower will let me enter with you. Since I have never attempted to enter it, there may be no way for me to do so without completing all of the levels and catching up.”

”Some of the tower floors we have done do not have a sky you could fly around in. I’m not certain how that would work.”

“Then I will have to wait and try. Otherwise, there is no point in worrying about what we cannot change right now. Instead, go home and tell Tanila I sent my greetings.”

Chuckling, Max slowly lifted the tail off his legs and set it down, allowing himself to stand.

“You know… sometimes I think you’re smarter than Fowl.”

“Oh, there is no doubt I am. Besides, he is wise in different ways.”

“Like what?”

“His knowledge of ale and alcohol is extensive from what I’ve gathered. Perhaps in time, I will be able to gain as much knowledge of them as him.”

Laughing, Max scratched the scales on his dragon's side before gently patting him.

“Thank you for coming and letting me see you.”

“Thank you for wanting to. It means more to me than you know that when you were hurting, you sought me out.”

With one last scratch, he watched as Rakonath took to the skies, flying toward the rising sun, his scales catching the colors of the morning and sparkling like jewels.

Who would have imagined I’d be so lucky?

You, Max Hoste, are incredibly blessed. Few could compare to having the family and friends you do, as well as me and that dragon. Now go and do what he told you to. It’s time to return home and face your friends.

Links

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[None]

[F5] 53/459(1) Chapter 459 - Everyone Loves Big Rewards

[F5] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2304468/chapter-459-everyone-loves-big-rewards;**53/459(1[this.Waybak=1 2025-05-26 9:38],[word.Waybak=1 2025-05-26 9:38],[Wayback_first2025-05-26 9:38],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-26 9:36],[this.word2025-05-26 10:04],[publish2025-05-25 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-25 15:02])Chapter 459 - Everyone Loves Big Rewards - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**

Chapter 459 - Everyone Loves Big Rewards

“I feel like Everetts called us into his office,” Fowl stated as he sat at the table with the rest of the party.

Max could see that everyone but Tanila looked slightly frustrated, having been summoned, as their archer had called it, a little bit ago.

“I’m not going to beat around the bush. None of us acted how we should have yesterday. How I left was uncalled for and for that I’m sorry.”

Fowl started to speak, but he cut him off with a raised hand.

“We’re tower climbers and that means we will face hard decisions and as a group have to come to them. If Dagon’s room taught us anything, none of us wants to die, and how we fight has to change. Every floor will get harder, and we all need to get stronger.”

A grunt came from Cordellia as she crossed both arms, leaning back in her chair.

“You disagree?”

“Seriously, Max? You’re the strongest one besides the King we’ve ever met, and right now you’re acting like you’re the same as us. That’s a load of ogre shite, and we all know it.”

“He’s not acting that way,” Tanila stated.

“Please, don’t go defending him just because he’s your man, and yes, you can play that princess card, and I’ll snap into line, but I’m sorry… dying hurt and for the first time since I joined this party, I now know how what I feared feels like.”

“Which is why Dagon had us experience it,” Fowl said quietly, playing with a finger as he gazed at the table they sat around.

“What does that mean?”

Taking a deep breath, their warrior sighed and scratched his bushy eyebrow before looking at their archer.

“Last night, I didn’t get much sleep, which usually makes me cranky.”

Batrire snorted and held up both hands as a silent apology.

“I’ll make no argument that there have been times in our adventuring when I was a *loot-baby* as someone once said, and I often whined and complained more than I should have. Yet, lying in bed last night with Batrire next to me, snoring like she always does, I thought about how the last days went.”

A few tears started to roll down the weathered face of their warrior and he let them be free, disappearing into his beard.

“I almost lost her once and that moment almost broke me. That day, I had to choose if I would give up this quest to be an adventurer, admit I was a failure and return home as one. Max didn’t let me. He gave everything to keep her safe and bring her back. He almost sold his soul to… Bob… in order to get the money we needed to pay for her healing.”

Fowl let out a small chuckle as he smiled at Max.

“We’ll ignore how it was my money that actually paid for everything… but in the end, he has never backed down and every choice he makes is as a leader with an impossible task. Us warriors know our job. To protect each of you is one hundred times harder because he loves all of us.”

A few sniffles came around the table, and Cordellia’s frustrated expression softened slowly.

“None of us would be where we are without him, and last night, I finally realized the whole point of Dagon letting us use his room. We’ve reached a point in the tower where we have to decide if we’ll risk everything, knowing that from this moment on, death could be right there.

“That each floor represents a test and a competition. I asked myself how one moves a whole party through a tower floor faster than Max? The answer is simple… It’s probably one person, maybe two, and the rest of that team is no longer there.”

Fowl’s thick fingers started to drum on the table as he smiled at Max.

“You knew we were tired from two days of fighting. The mud in places we don’t want to discuss made it worse. Each fight was hard because you made us work for it, and I realized last night that you were doing less and less, making me pick up the slack to help me learn to do so.”

Unable to help it, Max grinned and nodded.

“Tanila was casting more spells, and Cordellia had to shoot more arrows. We were never in real trouble, but you let us experience the frustration a normal party might, and those few *close* calls were reminders that stuff goes sideways.

“So when we reached the last part of the floor, I realize now that you would have ensured we were safe and not allowed us to fail. Even if it meant you killed them all after it started, you just wanted us to step up and be willing.”

He waited a few moments and then bobbed his head. “My god, Fowl… you’ve gotten smarter.”

“Bah, go hump a troll!”

Grinning, Max rose, moved to where his friend was, and hugged him. “You’re my brother, even if you’re shorter and hairy,” he whispered to him.

“And don’t forget it!”

After the two hugged and returned to their seats, Max watched the three women, waiting to see how they would respond.

“How you two always do that makes me jealous,” Batrire said. “Ready to kick each other’s arse one day, and the next, you’re hugging and comparing sizes. Still… Fowl’s right… I owe you much, and I’m sorry for not speaking up how I should have yesterday.”

He could see the tension between Tanila and Cordellia as both women gazed as each other.

“Fine,” their archer said after a moment, looking away first as she raised her hands in the air. “I acted poorly… and our warrior’s right. I was scared… I *am* scared… I… Experiencing how quickly Dagon killed me and knowing that somewhere out there are others like that was hard to deal with. But I shouldn’t have acted that way, and I can’t believe I’m going to say that Fowl’s right again, but you have sacrificed so much for us. I… I’m sorry, Max.”

With a single nod, he smiled at her. “I’d offer to hug, but you’ve never been much of one for that.”

Her response was an eye roll followed by a grin and her middle finger.

Clearing his throat, Max shrugged. “Well… I’ll owe Fowl a drink for that. It made what I was going to say a lot easier. We’re going to grind the heck out of every floor we can, and I’ll see about afterward running through as fast as possible for rewards after. For now we need both the experience of fighting as well as those gains.”

“Does that mean we’re going to go back to the 62nd floor today?”

Nodding at his friend, Max grinned.

“I figured I owed you a real apology, and if I can get you a treat, why not do that first.”

Grinning, their warrior stood.

“Well then, what are we waiting for?! There’s loot to be had!”

Groans and eye-rolls came from everyone as they all stood, smiles present as they prepared for another day in the tower.

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[Calculating Results of Previous Floor]

[…]

[…]

[Results Totaled]

[Time Spent on Floor is within Top 3]

[Number of Kills on Floor is in top 20%]

[Calculating Rewards]

[Rewards for Achieving Top 3 Fastest Time]

[Full Level Experience Granted & Skill Gem]

[Error - Experience denied]

[No Replacement given for lost experience]

[Skill Gem Granted - Epic Rank - Random Skill Granted upon use]

Max grinned as the shard appeared on the sand. He picked it up and motioned to his friends.

“Looks like we’re back in the top three!”

Each of them quickly came over and acquired their stone, and soon, the beach had four adventurers, all smiling from their new skill additions.

“You make me feel bad,” Fowl complained. “I’m over here crushing that gem without waiting, and I know you’re going to give it to your sister. Should I save mine and give it to someone else?”

“Ehhh… maybe? I mean you got the Staff weapon skill… which I still find funny but won’t comment on. That means you’re close to getting weapon mastery. It’s a great thing to have as it opens you up for a few other opportunities down the road.”

“Maybe… perhaps I’ll be nice in ten or twenty floors and give away one of mine.”

Chuckling, he gave his friend a gentle slap and then pointed at the water.

“Looks like we’re going to get wet.”

Grunting, Fowl nodded and tapped the ring on his finger.

“Already prepared. Wonder what the tower has in store for us today.”

Once everyone was gathered along the beach's edge, Max strode out on top of the water, grinning as the others waited for him to quickly scout ahead.

“He’s a bit of a show-off,” he heard Batrire say.

“But he’s my show-off,” Tanila replied.

***

This place is… almost impossible to comprehend.

For the first time in a while I agree.

With his boots, he moved through the water like he was flying, and beneath where the rest of the team waited, he saw a world similar to one he had only witnessed once.

Everywhere, tiny fish and other creatures were swimming and moving around the seabed, which dropped off into a sheer cliff after a hundred yards.

The light from the sun above streamed down, creating ripples of light that added to the already colorful space.

He could see for miles, and all sorts of plants of every color were attached to large pillars of rocks that rose up around him, creating movement everywhere he looked.

A few predators, perhaps?

It's still not something we should be concerned about. I think we should be more worried about what is below.

Some fish that looked like long snakes made quick attacks on smaller ones, each of them easily over twenty feet long, yet none of them appeared to want to come in Max’s direction.

Deeper within the water, it grew slightly darker but his boots allowed him to see through what he knew would be normally impossible and see lots of lights stretched in different directions.

Merfolk?

Perhaps… We can’t forget that many different kinds of beings live in water.

Seeing that they were going to be swimming downward, Max returned to his friends and explained what he had found.

“So we’ll need to be careful with the rings and make sure to recharge them,” Tanila said. “Perhaps we can take shelter in the dimensional space, and it will allow them to do so?”

“Yeah… drowning isn’t how I want to go,” Fowl added. “Still, I wouldn’t mind some fresh fish.”

Their healer groaned and bonked Fowl on the head with her staff.

“We’ll stick together and swim as a pack. I’ll take point while Fowl handles your three safety. His taunt obviously works best in that limited space.”

With no complaints, they set off, finding that most of the creatures avoided them. Only one of the serpent-like fish had been foolish enough to get close. It was pincushioned and stored within their warrior's ring after Cordellia ended its life.

About an hour passed, and Max and the rest began to sense a difference in the water temperature as the stone that rose from the bottom started to form chasms like a gorge in a mountain.

Each passing moment also made the lights below brighter, and as they drew close to the first section of stone and rock they would have to swim through, Max and Bob sent spells off in two directions!

“Incoming!”

Dozens of tentacles began to spring up from the dark spots within the stone, and as Bob’s wind blades and Max’s ice spear struck the thick appendages, roars reverberated in the water.

“Goblin shite! Are those kraken?!” Fowl shouted.

Max could only smile and nod as a trio of them began to rise from their hiding hole, yellow eyes locked on the party, their giant mouths starting to suck in water.

Looks like we’re going fishing!

A groan came from his head as another pair of wind blades was sent at the closest enemy.

You really need to get some better jokes.

Links

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[None]

[F5] 54/460(1) Chapter 460 - Familiar Situations

[F5] Next Chapter: 2025-05-26 15:02

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A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1,L2]

Chapter 460 - Familiar Situations

“That was disappointing,” Tanila said as she watched the carcass of the kraken she had killed on her own sink into the waters.

“And now we’re complaining about how easy that was,” Batrire teased. “Still, you’re right. None of those were as big as that one boss and both you and Cordellia made their life difficult after taking out their eyes.”

“Bah, easy she says,” Fowl muttered as he yanked a segment of a tentacle off his plate armor. “Try getting hugged by one, and then telling me how easy it was.”

As the group joked and teased, Max stored some of the pieces from the Kraken he had killed and considered the path they would have to take to continue their journey deeper.

“You think we’ll see more?”

He nodded at Cordellia as she stood next to him.

“I do. While there is a decent amount of space between the rocks, it’s a great choke point for anything coming through. And I can see a lot of other spots that might be caves or holes like these three came out of.”

“Better eyes than me right now,” she teased. “And… uh… again, sorry about the other day.”

“You’re fine. I my behavior made me looke like an arse also.”

“Hey… I didn’t admit to being one… even if I was,” Cordellia replied. “Still, thank you. I appreciate the fact you are always looking out for us.”

He gave her a grin and held out his fist. “I know you’re not a hugger.”

She groaned and bumped fists before moving to where the other three were.

They did good. Almost too good.

We are in a water floor and many might struggle with the movement restrictions. Those two are well suited for here with her arrows and Tanila’s spells. A different group might not have this kind of success.

True. I guess we’ll find out the hard way.

***

Two hours later, Max cracked his neck and allowed himself to relax a moment.

“So many suction cups,” Fowl muttered as he stood beside him. “I didn’t imagine there would be that many of those things in there.”

“Haha, and yet we did fine. At least we made it through the pass without any problems. Best yet is what is below.”

“You say that, but where do we start? There are so many lights down there… and it stretches on in three directions. How do we decide? Go where the biggest clump is?”

Max had been debating that, unsure how big of a potential city or something else could be down there. Knowing they were still a ways off from whatever lay beneath them, the fact that the three paths of light traveled in a straight line before vanishing from view made the whole thing look even bigger.

“Tough decision?”

He nodded at Tanila’s question as the other three joined him and Fowl. “Our warrior and I were trying to decide where to aim for. Whatever is down there… it’s not like anything we’ve seen before.”

“So it’s not like the merfolk tower floor?” Cordellia asked.

“It is, and it isn’t… the size is what’s different. This is at least ten times bigger. Our biggest problem is that I’d bet gold coins on the portal being in the largest section. Which causes a problem because that means we’re about to go somewhere that is potentially crawling… or swimming, with potential enemies.”

“Well the good news is we’ll fight what we can if need be.”

Batrire’s comment made him feel a little better as no one else seemed bothered by what he had said.

“I guess we’ll head out and aim for an outer edge. “

***

Drawing closer to the lights, the city beneath them started to take shape.

That makes Peltagow and Nalgrun look like farm towns…

You are correct, yet the gnomish city is similar to this.

Massive structures appeared, and shapes swimming around them were visible.

Each recognized the circular structure of the buildings, with smaller ones set near larger ones and tubes connecting them together.

Dark stone was easy to pick out, but they could see glass and metal giving off a reflection with pinks, yellows, greens, and other colors coming from different floors.

Small shapes moved around them like ants climbing over sticks and leaves in a forest.

As they neared the last few miles before they could physically touch a building, three different groups began to approach them.

“Uh… those are… merfolk and something else?” Cordellia asked when the groups got within range.

“She’s right,” Tanila stated. “I recognize the hair and way they move. The other two…”

Max saw it. If he had to guess, the one in the middle was the merfolk, while the one on the right had gold hair and almost milk-white skin. The pack on the left was

almost seethrough, and the shapes they had noticed were the reflection of light through their bodies.

“They’re not looking aggressive,” Fowl said as he stayed near the three women. “No weapons that I can see.”

Another minute passed, and the three groups moved about fifty yards from them and stopped.

One of the gold-haired beings, a woman, moved forward and held up both hands.

“Tower climbers, welcome. Your path lies before you. Are you ready to choose?” she asked.

“Choose what?” Max replied.

“Which tribe you shall champion of course. The tournament has been announced, and you must choose a side.”

“To fight?”

The woman shook her head, and he could almost hear the conversations from the ones behind her.

“You shall fight the other two tribes. To pass this floor, your party must win. Lose, and your journey ends here.”

After speaking, she smiled and displayed two rows of razor-sharp teeth.

“It would appear we don’t get much time to decide,” Max said as he looked at the others. “Any thoughts?”

“Well we know the merfolk, and that woman’s grin doesn’t make me want to side with them. I have no clue, but it’s almost impossible to detect the other side with my eyes right now,” Tanila said.

“I agree.”

Both Cordellia and Batrire nodded after their warrior and mage had spoken.

Turning back toward the three packs, Max moved a little closer.

“We’ll side with the merfolk.”

The two packs on the side laughed, and he watched as the gold-haired group grinned and displayed their teeth, a few of them licking both rows with exceptionally long tongues.

“We will feast tonight,” one said, and then they all departed.

The other group reacted as well, and the very water around them started to almost freeze as they turned and swam away in the opposite direction.

After both of the other races had swam away, the entire group of merfolk moved closer, and all of them bowed.

“We thank you for your willingness to fight for us. May you bring glory and honor and–”

The male who had been speaking froze, and Max followed where his eyes were gazing.

“Those boots! How do you have them?!”

“Jalnig Nuk gave them to me as a gift after defeating him.”

Max’s words caused their eyes to widen, and a woman, shrouded in more leather than the rest, tapped the one who had been speaking and swam past him.

“You defeated Jalnig Nuk?” Her voice seemed doubtful, but her eyes fixed on his boots.'

“I did. Is he here?”

“He doesn’t know!”

“How could he? They are not from here!”

“But those boots bear the King’s magic. It must be the truth!”

As the merfolk spoke in their language to each other, Max wanted to laugh.

“I can understand you, and yes, I defeated him. Now, what do I not know?”

If their eyes got any wider, he was confident some might pop out. “The King… he… is not here. We are…” she paused, glancing back at the rest and then frowned. “Come. It is better to take you to our place and tell you what we can. There will not be much time as the tournament has been called for. Soon you all must fight.”

“We all must–”

The woman raised her hand and cut off Cordellia who had moved to join Max. “Come, there is much to discuss.”

***

As they swam through the city, flanked by their escort, the light of the buildings seemed like they were swimming through the stars. Everywhere were the three races, all keeping to themselves.

A great contrast in expressions was shown on the two species they could see.

The gold-haired race all looked excited as their eyes followed the party.

The merfolk, however, didn’t look as cheerful, and Max wondered if they perhaps at least were hopeful of their presence.

Eventually, they were led to a large round building closer to the city's center and ushered into a space where, once they moved through it, all the water vanished.

Bright yellow light came from orbs hanging in the area and various seats were present.

Everyone funneled in after the ones leading them and found a trio of older merfolk sitting on separate chairs near the center of the large round room.

Gasps came as they entered, and the twenty-plus merfolk in various colored cloths bowed slightly and moved to the outer edges.

“You need to go present yourself to the council. They are here to speak to you.”

Max watched as the woman who had guided them took a few steps back.

With a motion of his head, him and his party strode across the room, their boots echoing off the coral floor as they made their way down the occasional step that led to a slightly lower level.

Finally, they stood before the council, two older women and a man.

Each had multiple necklaces and rings on. Their eyes studied the party as it came to them. Bright and colorful sashes decorated their bodies, wrapped around them multiple times to create unique outfits.

Max could feel their eyes on him as he stood slightly before the rest and the frowns and exchanged glances each gave each other after seeing his boots.

“You wear something you should not have, tower climber,” the man said. “We are anxious to hear how you have come across such a thing, but protocol dictates we welcome you first. I am Coburn. The one on my right is Riletta, and the one on my left is Nereid. Thank you for choosing to fight in our place.”

Each of them bent their necks slightly at the party.

“Thank you for the welcome. I am Max, and this is Fowl, Batrire, Tanila, and Cordellia. Honestly, we are a little surprised at how things have suddenly got us fighting in a tournament we know nothing about and how our choice had to be made right then. Still, as I’ve had relations with your kind before and found Jalnig Nuk to be honorable, the decision was easy to side with your people. Now tell me, what have we gotten ourselves into?”

All three of them frowned, and Riletta leaned forward.

“You must fight in a tournament and win. Three of you must fight. Two of you must win. The outcome of that tournament will determine which race shall experience life and which races will experience death.”

“Wait… we’re going to have to fight separately?” Cordellia asked. “What happens if one of us loses?”

“You can concede before a killing blow or dying from an injury. It counts as a loss just as much as dying does. Some consider it cowardly, but each must choose their own path.”

Their archer started to respond and then shut her mouth, almost making bubble sounds as she repeated opening and closing it.

“What do the winners get?” Tanila asked.

“Freedom from this place,” Nereid replied. “To return to our home. Not all of us will go but some. Those who have endured and not fallen.”

“And the losers?”

Coburn frowned at their mage's question.

“It… is not something most would like to hear.”

“We can take it,” Max stated.

“They become food.”

His words silenced everyone as the whole party looked at one another.

“I’m sorry, but you’re saying whoever wins eats the losers?” Fowl asked, shaking his head.

“Not just the losers but also a certain percentage of the population. Each race only gets so much food to tide us over between tower climbers. Then, when the tournament comes, whoever wins is given their normal portion plus ten percent or more of each other's race. The white skin and gold-haired race is the Naiads. They are fierce warriors and have strong magical and physical abilities. Each of them lives for combat and many will often try to make it so their opponent cannot concede. Once that injury has been inflicted, they will begin to eat their opponent to death on the arena floor.”

Max’s stomach churned slightly at the thought of witnessing such a thing.

Coburn saw their reactions and gave them a few seconds before continuing.

“The other race is the Aasaura. They are a very dangerous species and are known for stealth. You probably saw them… or saw parts of them because they intended it to be that way. Had they wished, you would never have known they were there. Each of them has a touch that it is so cold many die from just that one instance. Those strong enough to resist it will then find themselves under assault from invisible weapons.”

“So you’re saying they don’t ever show up? Like they’re always invisible?” Fowl asked.

“Yes,” Nereid replied.

“Holy elf tits,” their warrior muttered.

“This sounds pretty nasty, but we’ll be fine,” Tanila stated, putting a hand on Cordellia’s shoulder. “We got this.”

“If I may, I would like to change the subject. Please tell me how you met our king and acquired something from him. Never in all my time here have I ever seen such a thing.”

“How long have you been here?” Max asked.

Clearing his throat, the merman looked up momentarily before returning his attention to them.

“Four or five thousand years, if I’m right.”

Max handed Fowl and Cordellia a water flask as each started to choke.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Fun Fact - Book 9 starts today on Patreon[L3] ;)

Links

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[L1] https://m.media-amazon.com/images/I/91XzkQBt4tL._SL1500_.jpg

[L2] https://mybook.to/Slayer1

[L3] https://www.patreon.com/c/AuthorShawnWilson

[F5] 55/461(1) Chapter 461 - Round 1: Fight!

[F5] Next Chapter: 2025-05-27 15:02 [2025-05-26 15:24] [F5] 1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2309240/chapter-461-round-1-fight;55/461(1[this.Waybak=1 2025-05-27 15:03],[word.Waybak=1 2025-05-27 15:03],[Wayback_first2025-05-27 15:03],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-27 15:02],[this.word2025-05-27 15:04],[publish2025-05-27 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-27 15:02])Chapter 461 - Round 1: Fight! - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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Chapter 461 - Round 1: Fight!

Max could hear the murmurs and whispers of all the merfolk sitting on the floor and seats near them, discussing what he had just told them.

Even the council members took a moment to consider his story of meeting and defeating Jalnig Nuk.

“If he could withstand our King’s attack, surely that gives us hope.”

“Riletta, he can only fight once, and the other two must also win. How long has it been since that has happened?”

“Still this gives us hope! We should tell our people!”

Riletta seemed excited at the prospect of this fight while Coburn seemed to be the one who wasn’t. Nereid was silent the entire time they spoke, eyes fixed on the party.

“Do you know who we’ll fight?” Max asked.

Coburn’s head moved side to side for a moment.

“Each of us has individuals from our kind who train for these moments. Before it starts, they will be granted a potion that will transform them in power. The problem is… often, there is one who has won and chosen to stay here. Both races have such a champion. Each time they drink the potion, they grow stronger. They are truly frightening foes.”

“Do your people not have a champion like that?”

“We have not won in a long time. Many side with the Naiads or Aasaura. As such, our champions are defeated. The times a group of tower climbers has chosen us… we have not done well.”

“Wait,” Tanila said as she held up her hand. “You said we need to win two matches out fo three. How does this work? Do we fight one of the other races more than once?”

Shaking his head, Coburn used his tongue to pick at his teeth, wincing multiple times before Nereid cut him off.

“These fights are you against the other two races simultaneously. Three enter and only one leaves. It appears our foes have gotten smarter and played us for fools. Anytime a team picks us they ensure we lose. Anytime a group picks one of them, they work together to ensure the victory. Their losses have been mitigated by their gains, and our people have suffered greatly for it.”

Coburn crossed his arms and frowned.

“The chances of this being successful is still almost impossible. To withstand two opponents simultaneously with that kind of power isn’t a joke.”

“We’re not laughing,” Tanila replied. “Don’t worry. We’ll win this. Now tell me, how long do we have until the fight takes place?”

Rubbing his eyes, Coburn pointed at an hourglass on a table. It was as tall as Fowl and had pink sand running through it quickly.

“Perhaps two hours. Most likely less.”

She nodded and motioned for everyone to come closer.

“We need a room and some time to plan. I’ve got an idea.”

***

Tanila held Nereid’s gaze. “You’re certain this is the order of the fights?”

“Certainly. Each time, they put their strongest warriors in the last two. This first one is to make the whole tournament fun. Occasionally, one of our champions won because of this, giving hope to the others. Then, the next two matches become nothing but playtime for the races.

“The second fight will be the Naiads champion. The last will be from the Aasaura.”

“I appreciate your help and look forward to watching some of your people get to return home.”

Max watched as both women talked, knowing he was eavesdropping, but Tanila had told him he could. He could see the light returning to the merwoman’s eyes and was excited at the plan the love of his life had devised.

After the councilwoman had left, everyone gathered together.

“So this first fight is our easiest one. Someone has to go in there. It’s between you two, and I don’t care which of you goes.”

Fowl and Cordellia stared at each other, and they started laughing.

“Play you for it?” she asked.

“Donkey, Dwarf, Beer?”

“Of course!”

Each of them turned their back to the other and waited a second.

“Donkey!” Cordellia shouted.

“Dwarf!” Fowl yelled out.

“Beer!” Max called out, causing both of them to turn simultaneously.

Fowl was halfway bent over with hands on each side, mimicking a donkey, while Cordellia had her hands shaped like a cup, pretending to take a big drink.

“HAH!” their warrior exclaimed. “I knew it!”

“Bah! Why didn’t you pick dwarf?”

“Because only a fool of a dwarf picks himself. We’re all drunks, and we know it. So it’s donkey or beer every time for me.”

“Two out of three?” she asked.

Fowl shook his head and smiled. “Nope! Won fair and square. Now, I get to go fight some crazy arse bosses and hope to live.”

“If you die, Fowl Hammerfall, I’ll kill you,” Batrire stated as she grabbed his beard and pulled him close. “Do you hear me?”

“I do, babe, but stop that. You’re turning me on, and I need to get ready to fight.”

Cordellia made her gagging sound, and Max allowed himself to laugh as they knew what was about to take place was nothing to joke about. “You sure?”

Fowl nodded and puffed his chest out. “I’m going to kick both their arses, so go ahead and bet all the gold you got on me.”

***

Sweat ran from his forehead, and his mouth felt a little dry as Fowl stood there on the sand, watching the pair of fighters he was going to face.

Each was ten feet tall, and the one from the Aasaura was almost impossible to see even an outline of. Equal distance away in the weird triangle they started on was the one from the Naiads, and the warrior looked absolutely fearsome. She had two long curved swords and wore chain armor that almost looked like seaweed was growing on it. Her mouth looked big enough to swallow his head whole.

I’m an idiot… but I ain’t going to die.

His mind raced at what Tanila had told him, and with everything he had, this fight would be his first real test.

Around him, a stadium with at least four hundred thousand spectators was packed. It reached so high above him that he couldn’t see the top. Large screens were placed all over, and he knew they would show his potential win or almost guaranteed defeat.

Glancing across the sandy floor, he saw where Batrire and the others waited behind a gate. Each of them gave him a thumbs up or smile, trying to encourage him.

I shoulda picked Dwarf…

The announcer had finished whatever speech they were giving, and the crowd's roar shook the ground of the quarter-mile-wide arena floor.

A loud gong sounded, and the Aasaura disappeared completely from view, leaving him with a very hungry-looking Naiad.

Keeping with the plan, he moved as fast as his stubby legs would let him, racing to the gate where his friends were.

Laughter came from the crowd and behind as his opponent made her way toward him.

“Where you going my little snack!? I want to suck the flesh off your bones!”

A shiver ran through his spine as he considered what that might feel like and found a burst of speed, stopping right before the gate and bringing his shield and hammer to the ready.

“Good, you’re good,” Max said. “Make them come to you. I’ve got you.”

Nodding, he banged his hammer against his shield, waiting for the warrior to come.

Her eyes narrowed as she looked at him and then the rest of his friends behind him.

“They can’t help you! No spells can be cast through the gate! Instead they’ll get a front-row view of–”

“Shut your ugly mouth! I came here so they could watch me kick your skinny white arse!”

His shout made her blink a few times, and he smiled, glad that his helmet could be hidden and that she could see the look he was giving her.

She charged, apparently upset at either his taunt or his being cut off. Both swords moved with a precision he had witnessed many times.

The sound of metal on metal rang out and a pained cry escaped those ugly lips with so many teeth behind them.

“What… what is that!?”

Chuckling, Fowl swung his weapon at her. She had paused, and it appeared she was trying to figure out why she was bleeding and burning slightly.

His hammer struck a glancing blow against her foot that wasn’t covered in armor and caused her to leap back. Letting out a grunt from his attack.

“Left! 270!”

Without hesitating, Fowl spun to his left and followed Tanila's plan.

Thank the gods his sonar works.

[Juggernaut]

He streaked forward, shield out, and slammed into a shape just a few yards away, driving it backward and turning until he was facing the already close wall.

While he charged, he pulled out a potion Max had given him, smashing it against his face and feeling his body grow.

Gods, these goblin potions… it’s been so long!

Stronger and taller he now pinned his opponent against the wall.

A howl came from the Aasaura he couldn’t see but knew was hurting from the impact. Droplets of clear liquid ran down his shield onto the sand below.

His hammer struck repeatedly against something, causing more rivulets of liquid to appear.

“NOW!”

Max’s shout told him what was coming from behind.

[Ring Activated]

He became incorporeal, and the Naiad ran right through him, both of her swords slashing into the Aasaura he had already injured.

“The oath!” it cried out.

“I–”

No movement was seen but suddenly large chunks of ice began to form on the woman’s arm and a howl of pain reverberated near him.

Fowl didn’t wait as he put distance between the pair, storing his shield and pulling out the last item he had to use.

One sword was still being swung as the other appeared to be frozen solid, and Fowl heaved the cask at the pair, glad to have practiced throwing things for his whole life and turned, running again as fast as he could.

Heat washed over him a few seconds later, but he didn’t stop to look back. He continued moving for another twenty seconds, and the warmth of the fire that blazed behind him dissipated.

Finally, he turned to see the handiwork he had unleashed.

Two forms stood there, each struggling to walk, covered in a flame they all knew too well from a previous tower floor.

One fell, and then, after a few more seconds, the second dropped to the sand in the flames that had spread out.

Smoke rose upward, and he realized that the arena had gone silent.

A gong sounded. And then it sounded once more.

Cheers came from a smaller section of the space around him, the place where the race they had chosen to represent was.

He looked at them and saw smiles. Each of them shouted his name and danced in their seats.

A warmth, different from the still-burning inferno, formed in his chest, and a few tears began to appear.

Sniffing he quickly wiped them away.

Not now… otherwise, they’ll learn you’re a softy at heart!

Holding up both hands, Fowl joined in the celebration.

“The winner of the first Match is Fowl Hammerfall, champion of the Merfolk.”

“What? That’s it?! You rambled on about how great the others were before the match! Where is my love?!”

The announcer never answered his shout, yet he didn’t care. The sound of his side grew louder as he was announced the winner.

***

“When we get somewhere private…” Batrire said in a low growl. “You were amazing babe!”

“I know… I know… but still, we owe this to Tanila and Max. They put this plan together.”

“Yeah, but it wasn’t them out there showing all these people who the real man is.”

Puffing his chest, out Fowl nodded and struck a pose.

“You’re right babe. I am the real man.”

A giggle came from their healer as she grabbed his beard and began kissing him.

An elven archer began puking on the other side of the room, just a few yards away.

Links

//[2025-05-27 15:04]

[L1] https://www.royalroadcdn.com/public/covers-large/the-jade-shadows-must-die-aacacw6ufbc.jpg?time=1748131608

[L2] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/117944/the-jade-shadows-must-die-xianxia-inspired-litrpg

[L3] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/117944/the-jade-shadows-must-die-xianxia-inspired-litrpg

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[F5] 56/462(1) Chapter 462 - Round 2: Tanila

[F5] Next Chapter: 2025-05-28 15:02

[2025-05-27 15:02] [F5] 1)
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-is-up/chapter/2311576/chapter-462-round-2-tanila;**56/462(1[this.Waybak=1 2025-05-28 15:16],[word.Waybak=1 2025-05-28 15:16],[Wayback_first2025-05-28 15:16],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-28 15:14],[this.word2025-05-28 15:17],[publish2025-05-28 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-28 15:02])Chapter 462 - Round 2: Tanila - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 Is Up! | Royal Road**

Chapter 462 - Round 2: Tanila

The crowd's shouting and cheers were slightly different than they had been for Fowl.

I guess they weren't expecting what happened at all.

Unable to hide her amusement, Tanila smiled and waved when she heard her name announced.

Loud cheers came from the section where the merfolk were located.

Across the arena floor were her two opponents.

Just like Fowl described, the Aasaura was difficult to make out. Only a brief outline of something that wasn't right would occasionally appear and then vanish.

The Naiad who was to face her was on a different level than the previous one. She stood at least twenty-five feet tall and had two swords similar to what the previous fighter had used. Each of them was made of solid black metal and was at least nine feet long.

The armor she wore was also a black chain, a stark contrast to her milk-white skin. A pair of green eyes glared at her.

"If you keep breathing like that, you might pass out!"

"Your taunts won't work!" the woman shouted back. "Unlike my sister, I'm no fool and won't be distracted! I'll take my time, cutting you to pieces!"

"But if you do that, won't I just surrender?"

Gone was the calm demeanor and a low growl came from her opponent.

"I'll–"

"Cut out my tongue? Ok… sure, how will those swords fit in this tiny mouth?" Tanila called out as she used her hand to demonstrate. "I mean I can't even fit–"

"ENOUGH! Prepare to–"

“Die?! Be killed?! Oh, how original…”

Both swords slammed into the sand as her opponent’s face began to turn slightly red.

I need to thank Fowl for teaching me how to piss off people… who knew he had such a talent.

She summoned her lightning elemental and tapped her staff against the ground.

The announcer was finishing as he had before, and she knew it was almost time to begin.

“Oh, I forgot one last thing!” Seconds before she knew the gong would sound, her hair and eyes began to change color, and she felt the true power of her blood course through her.

Every part of her felt alive, so often, she wished she could stay like this. Max had told her she was strong enough to resist the temptation to give in to the sweetness of this intoxicating effect, but she wasn’t sure that was true.

Her whole body tingled, and every inch of her skin coursed with a power that was hers to command.

The expression on her opponent's face made the sensation of it all like frosting on a cupcake.

Damn you, Max… Now I’m hungry…

In her mind, she focused on him—his smile and the way it felt when he touched her. So many times, he had said she grounded him, but no matter what he said, the truth was he allowed her to be the person she was.

The gong sounded, and as her opponent grabbed both swords and raced toward her, Tanila grabbed an air spear and let it carry her toward Max and the others.

I really need to thank him for teaching me about this.

Walls formed and got in the way of her opponent as she sent smaller spells to distract and buy her time.

Overhead, a large cloud was forming, and she just needed more time to make it what she wanted.

[Wizard Step]

Two black blades struck the spot where she had been standing as the Naiad turned around, trying to find where she had gone.

Over and over, they played the cat-and-mouse game, and every so often, she sent out a Frost Nova, making sure nothing snuck up on her.

“Stop running!”

“Stop being too slow!”

Another growl came, and she waited, knowing something had to change.

Her opponent turned red, and the speed at which she moved told her everything she needed to know.

Ugh… Berserker…

Hate-filled eyes locked onto her, and it took every ounce of concentration she had to stay away from the charging Naiad.

What had been three to five seconds of peace turned into only one as she continued to zigzag back and forth across the arena floor, using all the space she could to get away.

Seconds ticked away, and then the red glow faded, and the woman slowed down.

“Seems your skill ran out! You should–”

Her taunt seemed like a good idea, but then Tanila discovered the problem with talking all the time.

She had forgotten to cast Frost Nova, focusing on staying alive and being a pest.

Pain began to radiate from her back as cold seeped in.

[Wizard Step]

Instantly, she was just a few yards behind the spot where she had been standing and cast Frost Nova immediately, causing a shape to appear as it radiated out from her.

[Stone Prison]

[Root]

Every nerve in her back ached, but she ignored them, moving again as the Naiad came at her.

“You forget! There’s two of us!”

Not giving in to the desire to point out how the second one was currently not moving, Tanila continued to pour mana into the storm cloud above.

Lightning crackled and popped, unable to be contained by how much she had already fed the spell.

Ten more seconds…

More attacks came, and she felt the drain on her mana pool. Using this spell over and over was taxing, and while she could do it more than most, especially in this state, she was running on fumes.

Two more…

One last cast sent her to safety, and she called down the spell she had been building up.

This is going to suck...

[Spell Burst]

[Lighting Storm - Focused]

She screamed as the cost she couldn’t pay tore through her, the agony of running completely out of mana and demanding a price that wasn’t there.

Yet her scream was unable to be heard of the sound of the bolt which came from the cloud, striking the Naiad who had smiled for a moment, just a dozen yards away, swords raised and ready to cut her in half.

Like lightning rods, the spell traveled down both of them into the woman, and a bright light blinded anyone watching.

The scent of burning flesh was gone the moment it had started, vaporized by the amount of heat and power conducted in that one section of space.

Black glass formed, racing across the center of the impact zone, expanding for dozens of yards, stopping inches from where she lay crumpled in the sand.

Silence.

Breathing.

No noise reached her ears as her mind screamed in agony and pain.

“SAY IT! SAY IT, TANILA!”

The voice.

That voice.

She knew it.

Every part of her loved its tone.

Chills and shivers filled her when it said her name.

It reminded her of what needed to be done.

“I… forfeit!”

Her throat was dry, and she could barely speak, yet she willed everything she had to yell.

“I forfeit!

“FORFEIT!”

The sound of a gong rang out.

A few seconds later, a second one came.

Cheers came from almost half of the arena.

She could hear it, and it made her head hurt more.

A cool sensation washed over her, and slowly, the pain of everything began to fade away.

“I’ve got you.”

Wetness ran down her throat.

It tasted awful, and she knew it was a potion so rare that most mages would give up so much for one.

Warmth spread through her body as the liquid raced down her throat.

Mana crept into her body and was immediately sucked away.

She owed a price and until it was paid the pain of what she had done would not diminish.

Another piece of glass touched her dry lips.

“Drink.”

Something sweet flowed down her throat after dancing along the top of her tongue.

Unable to help, she cried out in pain as her body shook, yet hands held her against something warm.

Max... he’s holding me.

She wanted to cry out, to say his name but couldn’t.

Once again, the same awful taste came, and this time her body absorbed it, and when it was all over, only a slight amount of mana was left in her.

It was enough, though.

“Max…”

“Heal her!”

Warmth came as life sprung up inside her.

Blinking, she saw the face of the man she loved looking at her. His bald head glistened in the arena's light, and his smile looked forced.

Reaching up she stroked his cheek.

“Thank you.”

“Gods woman… You were amazing.”

He bent down and kissed her, and all the pain and dryness that was on her lips began to vanish as the wetness of his touched hers.

Wrapping both arms around him, she pulled him close, not caring that Fowl or Cordellia had said something she would repay them for later.

All she cared about was the man who held her and loved her.

Slowly the world returned to normal, and she pulled back, taking in lung-filled breaths.

“I… I needed that.”

He laughed and nodded.

“Anytime you need that, I’m more than happy to provide. Now then, my love, can you stand?”

Smiling, she nodded, let him lift her to her feet, and quickly found her balance.

Her whole team was there and the expressions on their faces told her they understood what she had done.

“I’m proud of you, lass,” Batrire whispered as she came next to her and hugged her. “You showed them we’re not to be trifled with.”

Next the one she wasn’t sure would ever be able to see past her being a princess strode toward her.

Gone was the look of timidness that had so often filled those eyes.

She could see something different.

A new kind of respect.

“You… wow. I’m not sure anyone else in our world could have done what you did. Not even Max. Your child is lucky to have such a strong mother.”

Her knees went weak for a moment, and Max was right there to keep her standing.

Unable to speak, she simply nodded and smiled at their archer who moved a step so Fowl could come next.

“I must say you’re a quick learner, Tanila. Usually it takes a lifetime to find out how to infuriate people, but you did it on the first try. Perhaps I’m a genius when it comes to teaching. If this adventuring stuff doesn’t work out, I’ll open my own shop. Fowl’s School of Smack Talk.”

She reached out and grabbed the dwarf who had worn her down when they first met. His smile and joy of life had allowed her to join them and not be concerned with who she was. Watching him love on Batrire even when he wouldn’t say the words gave her hope of something like that one day.

“You know you’re my favorite dwarf,” she whispered into his ear so Batrire wouldn’t hear.

She felt him stiffen and then laugh. “You’re an evil one,” he declared, wagging a finger at her. “Saying that and doing it so that you can deny it… I’m too good for my own britches. Now you’ll find ways to piss me off without even trying.”

Winking she watched as he stepped back.

Max reached out and took her hand, slowly turning her until she faced him.

“I never doubted you. I knew you could do it.”

“Please, all of my plans always go perfectly. You know that.”

She watched him roll his eyes and shake his head.

“Not that… you. Right now. You don’t feel it, do you?”

Blinking she realized what he was talking about and reached over her shoulder, pulling a strand of braided hair so she could see.

The gold glow of it was there.

Even though every part of her felt alive, her hunger wasn’t there right now.

“Wha… I…”

“It’s because you replaced it with something else, didn’t you? The same thing that allowed me to resist the hunger.”

Letting her braid fall, she touched her chest and took a deep breath.

Closing her eyes, Tanila realized that he was right. At the edges of everything was the desire for power she had feared for so long. Yet, holding it back was exactly what Max had just said.

I… I’m loved… for me… just as I am and not what it wants me to be.

Smiling, she stroked his cheek.

“Thank you. For everything.”

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Got a new story starting today - 1 chapter per week (maybe 2, most likely 1). You the reader vote on the path. Order / Chaos - you decide![L1]

Links

//[2025-05-28 15:17]

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/115589/two-paths-one-choice-a-choose-your-own-litrpg

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[F6] 57/463 Chapter 463(1) - Round 3: Max

[F6] Next Chapter: 2025-05-30 15:02 [2025-05-30 9:00] [F6] 1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-stubs-531/chapter/2314300/chapter-463-round-3-max;57/463(1[this.Waybak=1 2025-05-30 8:06],[word.Waybak=1 2025-05-30 8:06],[Wayback_first2025-05-30 8:06],[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-30 8:06],[this.word2025-05-30 12:57],[publish2025-05-29 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-29 15:02])Chapter 463 - Round 3: Max - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 STUBS 5/31 | Royal Road

Chapter 463 - Round 3: Max

It’s funny how Tanila’s plan has gone perfectly so far.

You chose well. I’m quite certain she is smarter than you.

Max chuckled as he did not doubt that Bob was right.

His opponents were in their spots, and he stood there, weapon and shield in hand, ready for a match that was specifically designed for him.

Part of me wonders what they must think after watching what they witnessed. I mean they know one of them has to win. We lose if we don’t, and with Tanila forfeiting, they probably think we used our strongest one, hoping for two wins in a row.

I’d hold off on the cocky side at first. Don’t forget what Dagon taught us. Every match is a fight to the death, and at least one of these has done it multiple times.

He knew Bob was right, and forcing himself to focus took a little effort.

There was no outline at all where the Aasaura was supposed to be, and he doubted the Naiad he was facing would be much of a problem. She looked a little larger than the one Fowl had faced, but after watching the first two fights, he was certain he could kill that one easily.

I know. We'll stick to the plan.

When his name was called, the merfolk crowd went wild, cheering and shouting louder than for the other two fights.

Tell me… do you think she'll be able to handle it? The change?

From how she appeared from the moment you saved her until we walked out here, Tanila has managed to control that part of her well. The way she stands and talks hasn't changed even though her whole body is coursing with power unlike before.

He nodded to no one, recalling how she did act the same even though she wasn't. While the outside might look different, he knew the woman he loved was still the same on the inside.

"The time has come to determine this tournament winner! Prepare for a fight unlike all the rest!"

Max frowned as the side where the Aasaura were sitting erupted.

I mean… do they actually get to see the fight?

Probably the ones from that race can. Then again, does it matter as long as your side wins?

Twirling his sword a few times, Max waited. The time it took for the match to begin was killing him.

Finally, the gong sounded, and the moment it did he was gone.

Running at full speed, he rammed into the Naiad and drove her into the wall, crushing her between his shield.

Blood poured from her mouth and created a design along the wall as he turned to find his real opponent, glad for the rush of cold that told him that the first task was done.

"Come out and play!"

His taunt did nothing, and a part of him was almost saddened that no reply had come.

It's smart enough not to respond, knowing you could locate it possibly that way.

Just a few yards from the wall and the crumpled corpse, Max's sword vanished. A chair appeared, and once it was set down on the sand, he sat in it. He then pulled his sword back out.

Sitting there with a shield and sword casually hanging from his hands, he waited.

The crowd seemed to hate and love the taunt he was throwing out, some shouting for blood and others calling on the Aasaura to not be a coward.

Seconds ticked by, and nothing appeared on his sonar after half a minute. Max sighed.

It's never easy is it.

Again, this opponent is smart. He saw you move and knows you're fast. For a predator like it, this isn't a race. It's a game of waiting for the right moment.

Then, I guess I'll have to make that moment appear like I told Stacy.

Standing up he stored the chair and faced the wall he had used to end the Naiad's life.

"One chance. Take it before it's gone forever."

Tapping his foot, he waited, trying to appear relaxed and unprepared yet completely ready to move in a moment.

When no strike came, he shrugged and faced the entire arena floor.

Do it.

The sand began to rise, and an inch-thick layer of it hovered about three feet off the ground for a hundred yards around him.

Go.

Jogging, he started to sweep around the arena, changing directions as the circle of sand followed him. He began moving faster and faster, hoping to spot what he was looking for.

Nothing appeared and his frustration grew and he paused in the middle of the arena.

Wait... Once I start to move, make it three layers, thinner, and seven, fifteen, and thirty feet high. These walls are thirty-five feet tall, and if what you said is true...

It may be sticking to one above our current layer. Well done.

Darting forward, Max watched as Bob did as he asked. The sand separated, forming smaller layers of the shimmering white material. It only took him three seconds to find the disturbance in his new approach, and as he moved in its direction, his sonar sensed the incoming barrage of attacks.

A thirty-foot-tall outline appeared, sand impacting its shape as it darted around the arena, tossing invisible daggers of ice at him.

Each one struck his shield, easily blocked as his ability to sense them negated their surprise attack.

A single howl came from the beast, and he knew it had to have realized it wouldn’t win this fight.

He was closing in on it, just a few seconds away from reaching it, knowing what it would say.

All the sand fell to the ground as Bob cut off the flow and he entered stealth.

[Blink]

[Berserker]

[Ultimate Form]

[Rampage]

[Magical Strike]

[Ghost Strike]

[Power Strike]

His move had caused it to stop. The words it had been about to utter halted.

Dagon’s lessons paid off.

There was no point in holding back, hoping his strength alone would be enough to end this thing's life.

He would only get one shot, and he was going to take it. Max could now end the tyrannical reign of these fighters, who devoured those unfortunate enough to pick the wrong side.

His blade struck where the head was, still invisible and unable to be seen, but his sonar knew exactly where it was.

All three strikes weren’t needed but they were used, taking off its head at the neck and slicing off its right shoulder.

Clear liquid gushed like a geyser from the wounds and Max landed on the ground, reappearing before a crowd that hadn’t made a sound.

A cold wave of power washed over him, and he smiled, knowing his job was done.

“Well??! They’re dead! Play the sound!”

The ringing of the gong took place twice, with no delay between them, and the merfolk side went wild.

Flicking his sword to clean what little liquid had a chance to adhere to it, he stored it and walked to the gate where his friends were.

***

“You three… no wonders you had defeated Jalnig Nuk!” Nereid exclaimed. “To see such a solid victory! And… you did as you said you would, defeating the champions that caused us so much pain.”

Tears rolled down her cheeks as the woman looked up at them from the floor where she had kneeled.

“We are happy to help friends,” Tanila said, smiling softly and trying to pull the woman up. “So please, stand with us, and let’s celebrate with the rest of your people.”

The councilwoman nodded, laughing and crying as she discussed what this victory could do for their people.

“You seemed to have not held back,” Fowl said as they followed at the back of the group. “Dagon would be impressed.”

“Please… you’re the warrior who took down two alone. If you aren’t careful, I’ll start hearing badly sung songs about you in the local ale houses and have to set them straight.”

His friend laughed and punched Max in the side. “Today feels good… I mean… really good. For once, I believed I carried my own weight. Which, as we both know, is a lot.”

Resisting the urge to comment on their warrior's waistline, Max nodded. “I still can’t believe you won that game of Donkey, Dwarf, Beer. You never seem to beat me.”

“That’s cuz you cheat! We both know it!” their warrior exclaimed.

Laughing so hard it caused the others to look back, Max winked at his friend.

“I knew it! I knew you lied when you said you weren’t cheating! Bah, you ogre humpin, warrior! I can’t even enter a drinking contest without wondering if you’ll steal it from me.”

“Please… the only thing I have to worry about now is needing to take a piss,” he replied. “We both know neither of us is going to get drunk.”

Max enjoyed the entire walk with Fowl, and they were each glad to have a moment to celebrate the successes of what had occurred.

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“You five have earned a place within our hearts and our stories,” Riletta said as she drew a red line on each of their foreheads. “Know that the ones who are able to return home shall spread the story of you five. Do not doubt that our King will hear of your kindness and, if your paths ever meet again, will give you a feast worthy of such an accomplishment.”

Coburn stepped up after her, his finger making a new mark with yellow next to the first.

“Many come to the tower and choose the path they walk. You have swam with us and provided us with food and safety. As such our children will be taught your name and some may even carry it all their lives.”

“Poor kid,” Cordellia whispered. “Look, it’s Fowl.”

Chuckles came, and the councilman cleared his throat as he finished making the last mark.

Nereid’s cheeks were still wet, and she dipped her finger in the small jar she held and smiled.

“This last mark is one of kinship. You shall be part of our family. Any merfolk who meets you will know you as a brother or sister. Our homes shall always be open to you.”

Max watched as she did Tanila’s forehead first, and the paint glowed before vanishing.

That appears to be similar to the mark you were given.

Should I reject it?

Bob hesitated a moment as Nereid did Batrire next.

No… you’re not making a pact or promise, so you should be fine. I can imagine this brings blessings and curses, but turning it down would be problematic. Remember what that being told us. Our choices will have long-term effects.

Which means there may be merfolk out there named Fowl.

Yes… a pox on generations to come.

When Nereid reached him, she dabbed her finger against a fresh tear.

“You, Max Hoste, I offer something special. While some might consider what I am about to do a dangerous decision, I have witnessed a man who stood against our King and bears his armor. Not only that, you defended us, and even more, I saw a love most could only dream of displayed for the one you call Tanila. As such, take this.”

She bit her lip and dabbed the spot of blood that formed on her finger.

“My line is your line.”

Gasps came from around the room, and Coburn started to shout as Nereid's finger touched his head and made a mark.

[Bloodline Granted]

[Merfolk Status Granted]

[Calculating]

[Bloodline is Currently 60%]

He felt warmth flood through his body, and Nereid sagged, his arms catching her as she fell.

“What did you do!”

“Leave her!” Riletta shouted, grabbing onto the councilman as he moved toward them. “This was her choice!”

“What… what’s happening?” Max asked as he watched the woman in his arm begin to age.

“Protect your people and mine. I finally found one worthy of my life.”

A gentle breeze came, and the councilwoman turned to dust instantly. Her clothes became flat, and some fell to the floor while a few hung on his hands.

“No… she…”

Max glanced around the room to see all the merfolk except Coburn and Riletta had fallen to their knees, heads bowed.

“She has made a choice, and we must accept it. Perhaps one day you and I will find another worthy of such a thing.”

Slowly, the councilwoman moved to Max and held out her hand.

“Stand, Max Hoste. You have been marked and granted access to a bloodline. One day, may you grow strong enough to seed an entire race.”

“Uh… what in the gods just happened?” Fowl asked.

Max could see Tanila shaking even though she smiled. “He’s… evolving.”

Links

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[None]

[F6]58/464(1) Chapter 464 – Evolving

[F6] Next Chapter: 2025-05-30 15:02 [2025-05-30 9:00] [F6] 1) https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-8-stubs-531/chapter/2316776/chapter-464-evolving;58/464(1[this.Waybak=1 2025-05-30 15:03],[word.Waybak=1 2025-05-30 15:03],[Wayback_first2025-05-30 15:03],

[Waybak_Last],[this.Fav2025-05-30 15:02],[this.word2025-05-30 15:02],[publish2025-05-30 15:02],[this.Last_edit2025-05-30 15:02])Chapter 464 – Evolving - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG - Book 8 STUBS 5/31 | Royal Road

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 464 – Evolving

“I’m sorry, come again?” Fowl asked. “What does that even mean?”

Max was only slightly listening to them, his mind still reeling from what had just taken place.

I... she gave me her bloodline? How is that even possible?

Ask Tanila. She appears to know more than we do.

Still holding a few pieces of clothing, Max looked up at the woman he loved and saw that her gold eyes were wide.

“What... how did she do this?”

Riletta made a shushing sound.

“That is not to be discussed in the presence of everyone. Please, if you five would follow me.”

Cordellia’s hands lifted him, and Max followed the older merwoman, almost not noticing the look of frustration on Coburn’s face.

She took them to a doorway and down a short hall and finally into a small room with a circular couch.

“Sit, relax. I will return in a few minutes with some food and drink. It appears you have much to talk about.”

As Riletta moved past Max, she lifted a hand and brushed his cheek.

“Those garments are yours, along with her gift. Treasure them. May you never forget the faith she has put in you.”

Everyone was still standing near the door as it slid shut. Tanila coughed to get their attention.

“Sit. I’ll explain what I know, but we need to sit.”

Almost as if half asleep, the rest of the party followed her instructions, each one still looking at Max.

“How do you feel? Are you okay?”

He nodded at her as he licked his lips. “I’m a bit in shock. Not from anything that happened physically but just from what she did. I didn’t realize that could happen that way.”

A cough came from their mage as she shook her head. “Wait… you already know about the bloodline?”

“Uh… yeah. From having killed Riniya & Kazrak. I… uh didn’t mention anything because I wasn’t sure what it meant and didn’t want to talk about it until I knew more.”

“Of course, he’s already done something like this,” Fowl muttered. “And by this, I mean what the hell are we talking about?”

Sighing, Tanila glared at their warrior who leaned back slightly as he got his first real glare from the gold-eyed elf.

“Each god has a bloodline. Thuyja has granted us, the royal family, hers. My eyes and hair are part of what tells you I possess it. If what Max has said is true then most likely something about Kazrak was a distinguishing feature as well. He might have been hiding it, like I can mine, but I doubt it. Someone like him doesn’t strike me as someone who would do so.”

“Maybe his size?” Cordellia asked.

“It could be. Regardless. Each bloodline has other perks. While most won’t tell you what they are, they add tremendous power and strength to what is called a *true descendant* of the god. From what I’ve learned, the bloodline that Phaius handed out is gone. That is why the queens are a former shell of what the human kings and queens once were and most likely made the deal they did for power, allowing their people to be used as cattle.”

“So how does one get a bloodline? I mean does a god… you know… do the naked dance and–”

Batrire smacked Fowl with a brush and had a bar of soap in the other.

“What, woman?! There ain’t no children here! I’m guessing even Cordellias has done the–”

A pillow hit their warrior in the face, and Max saw the look of anger in their archer’s eyes.

“Finish that statement and so help me I’m going to shove my foot so far up your arse you’re going to taste the crap I stepped in.”

Fowl balked, holding up both hands and closed his mouth.

“No one knows,” Tanila replied with a chuckle. “All we know is that the bloodline can be granted in some ways like Nereid did. It is protected in ways you wouldn’t believe, which is why…”

She paused, gently rubbing her stomach as she glanced down at it.

“My father… this child is already in danger for being half-human and half-elf. But the fact it will carry the bloodline of my people… Once he finds out, a target will be on their back forever.”

Finally regaining his senses, Max stored the clothing he had been holding and scooted closer to her, wrapping an arm around her shoulder and placing the other on her stomach.

“No one will ever hurt our child or you. You know that.”

She sniffed and nodded. “Words and the ability to carry them out are two different things,” she replied. “Not that I doubt your commitment or intentions, but I think we both know there is still a gap in our power compared to a king. Dagon has done more than we realized by showing us that true power. Even what I have isn’t equal to my father.”

“I’m sorry, dear. Can you tell us what you have exactly? Beyond the golden hair and eyes that make you look like a goddess?”

She chuckled at Batrire’s words and sighed.

“I… can. For so long I fought this form because of what it unlocks; in my mind, it was all about power and strength. If you remember, I mentioned that my mother stays in this form because she cannot overcome the desire to look that way or feel the way it makes her. While I’m in this form all of my stats are doubled.”

“Holy elf–”

“Tits,” Cordellia finished their warrior's curse.

“You’re serious? Double?! As in times two?”

Nodding at their healer, Tanila tapped her wrist where the bracelet was.

“Imagine cutting off that kind of power and strength because when you have it and know people struggle to be around you. The choice is to allow them to act like a servant or slave or limit yourself.”

“But I don’t feel that kind of pressure… I mean… I guess it’s there, but it’s not like it was the first few times you displayed it. Why?”

“Friendship? Acclimation? Strength? I’m not sure. There were elves in our castle that could withstand the power and pressure. If memory serves me, all of them were incredibly strong.”

“Okay, we’re drifting off the path,” Fowl said. “So what do you mean that Max is evolving?”

He watched as everyone turned their attention back to him.

“I think I already know the question you're going to ask,” he said. “You want to know specifically what I know or have?”

“Always the smart one,” Tanila replied.

Smiling back at her, he took a deep breath. “I gained 20% from Riniya and 20% from Kazrak after killing them. When Nereid did what she did, I gained another 20%.”

Tanila tsked her tongue and tapped her chin. “Well, that does pose a problem… you have three bloodlines in you, and I’ve never heard of that before. Usually it’s just one, and I’m not sure how the three even mix or what that would mean on the power it provides. All I know is the little my father drilled into me about protecting the bloodline, and how it was a gift, and that if we ever completed the tower, we could start our own.

“Part of me wanted to complete the tower because… because I wanted to be different from what I saw in my family and didn’t want to follow his path.”

“You’ve done a great job making your own way,” Max stated. “Still, I don’t know anything beyond that either. I could try to summon Phaius again and find out more, or perhaps Dagon would be willing to share some knowledge.”

“Perhaps. He might be willing to do that. Still… I’m not sure what all this means.”

Max noticed his friend holding his hand up.

“Uh… why are you raising your hand?”

Clearing his throat, Fowl shook his hand a few times at everyone.

“I’m going to ask a question… it might sound… dirty… but it’s not. So don’t be tossing pillows or smacking me with stuff.”

He watched as all three women raised an eyebrow at the same time.

“No promises,” Batrire muttered. “Spit it out.”

“So… Max and Tanila are having a baby… that happened before he killed those two… which means the baby they’re having will only have one bloodline?”

Their mage started to snort and then began to laugh, her eyes watering from how hard and long she laughed.

After a moment, Tanila wiped both eyes and smiled at their warrior.

“That was a fantastic question and the answer is, I have no idea. From what I know, which again is limited, I don’t know. Just as Nereid gave hers away, and as I mentioned before, there are ways to transfer it. When we complete the tower, and if he can get one, who knows.”

What would that do for a child? I mean I know you don’t know everything but based on what Tanila has said, if she gives her full bloodline, and I have my own bloodline and can transfer some of it to our child…

Then they would be incredibly powerful. Both in good ways and in bad.

When words get out, many might fear them.

Others might seek to use them. This path we walk is unlike anything I can recall from my memories. There must have been some time when two bloodlines merged. Phaius could most likely answer that question as well.

It looks like I will need to try to have another conversation sooner rather than later.

Later is better. Finish the tower. We need to get stronger. Tanila is right. Her father is going to be just like Dagon if not worse. You've seen her power and know what she is capable of. Imagine a King with access to potions with red skills and hundreds of years to grow stronger.

"Max?"

Her voice brought him back, and he smiled, tapping his head.

"I'm fairly certain we're not going to solve anything at the moment, and I doubt I'm suddenly going to grow longer ears, have hair all over my body, or grow gills."

Fowl chuckled and stroked his beard.

"If there's one thing for sure we know won't happen, it's you getting any hair."

All of them laughed and took a moment to let the actions they had accomplished today sink in.

Eventually, Riletta returned with some food and drinks, Coburn in tow.

"Forgive me," the councilman said as he bowed. "I… the action of a friend for thousands of years caught me off guard, and I now see the wisdom in her choice. To lose her hurt and that she had not warned me beforehand was even harder. Know that I am again grateful for what you have done for us.

"Our people are dancing everywhere, celebrating a victory that has long been believed impossible. Now we shall have enough food to reproduce and replenish those we lost."

"Uh… I got a question," Fowl said as he set down his cup. "How much food do you get for a win like this?"

A devilish grin appeared, and Coburn looked almost evil for a moment as he rubbed both hands together.

"We are going to feast on fifteen percent of both races."

"Um.. uma.. I'm sorry, what?"

A chuckle came from Riletta as she gave Coburn a gentle shove.

"Forgive him for acting like this, but yes, we will get to eat a portion of their population. The Ausaura are actually quite tasty and can be prepared in many different ways."

Max watched as his dwarven friend turned a little green.

“Perhaps instead, we could go ahead use the portal. While we appreciate your hospitality, we have a tower to climb, and time is always an important factor in our life.”

Both of the older merfolk laughed and nodded. “Forgive us… living four thousand years makes you forget that others are in a hurry. We can go right now if you are ready.”

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[Tower Floor 64 Reached]

[Completion of Tower Floor 63 Achieved]

[Full Level of Tower Experience Granted]

[Calculating Results of Previous Floor]

[…]

[…]

[Results Totaled]

[Time Spent on Floor is within top 10%]

[Number of Kills on Floor is tied for 1st]

[Calculating Rewards]

[Potion - Elixir of Stats]

[Potion - Elixir of Stats]

Max shook his head in disbelief as two golden potions appeared at his feet on the obsidian floor.

“Two?!” Fowl exclaimed. “We get two?”

“Yup! It appears we’ve tied for first place.”

Laughter and cheers came as everyone raced forward to claim their prizes.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

BOOK 8 STUBS 5/31! Prepare for 10 Chapters dropping tomorrow! (sorry for late notice - Book 8 goes live on amazon June 5th and I need to take down!)[L3]

Links

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[L1] https://www.royalroadcdn.com/public/covers-large/113340-corrupted-cardsmith-a-craftingdeckbuilding.jpg?time=1748273149

[L2] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/113340/corrupted-cardsmith-a-craftingdeckbuilding-litrpg

[L3] https://www.royalroad.com/amazon/B0F4RX9HX5

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Book 9 ch1- New Dreams END